

Adding Vitamin D to milk

Many studies in Finland have revealed that the dietary intake of Vitamin D is low in comparison to recommendations. This has been observed in the elderly, the adult population, young people and preschoolers. Infants and toddlers, elderly people who rarely go outdoors, and vegetarians, as well as those eating sparingly, form an obvious risk group in regard to Vitamin D deficiency. In Finland Vitamin D is only synthesized by the body under the influence of ultraviolet light to any great extent in summer. An adequate amount of Vitamin D is essential for the condition of the skeleton and for health.

The addition of Vitamin D to milk and other liquid milk products became possible at the beginning of December. At the suggestion of the National Nutrition Council, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has amended its decree on the addition of vitamins and certain other substances to foodstuffs such that it is now legally possible to add more Vitamin D. Vitamin D concentrations can be raised from the present level of 0.08 µg/dl to 0.5 µg/dl. Since it has already been possible to add Vitamin D to margarines, the decree applying to this has not been amended. Adding this vitamin to lactose-free milk drinks, as well as to liquid products based on soybean and cereals, is also permitted. Organically produced milks may not be supplemented with Vitamin D.

Addition of Vitamin D to milk does not result in excessive intake

The consumption of foods, like fish and fish products, which are a good natural source of Vitamin D, plus vitamin-enriched margarines and milk products, will increase the average daily intake of Vitamin D for Finns from the present level of approx. 4 µg to 7 µg in young people and adults. The recommended daily intake of Vitamin D for adults is 5 µg. Even the abundant use of milk products enriched with Vitamin D does not increase the intake over the level considered safe. However, Vitamin D supplements f.ex. tablets can, in conjunction with vitamin-enriched foods, increase the total intake to an unnecessary high level.

Infants and toddlers continue to require Vitamin D in the form of vitamin supplements. At the beginning of 2003 the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health will be issuing a new recommendation for pregnant and breast-feeding mothers, toddlers and elderly people in regard to Vitamin D supplementation.

Milk products enriched with Vitamin D will be launched on the market in the beginning of the year 2003 and the concentrations of the vitamin in some margarines will also be raised.

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