



The Benefits of Vitamin D Supplements vs. Sun Exposure

July 2025

For individuals seeking to increase their vitamin D levels, **vitamin D supplements can be a good alternative to sun exposure.** This is especially relevant given the risks associated with excessive sun exposure, such as skin damage and increased risk of skin cancer.

Here's a Comparison of Vitamin D Production Through Sun Exposure and Supplements:

- **Sun Exposure:** The skin synthesizes vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol) when exposed to ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation from the sun. However, the amount of vitamin D produced depends on various factors like latitude, season, time of day, skin pigmentation, age, amount of skin exposed, and sunscreen use.
- **Vitamin D Supplements:** These supplements come in two main forms: vitamin D2 (ergocalciferol) and vitamin D3. Both are well absorbed, but studies suggest that D3 is more effective in raising and maintaining higher serum vitamin D levels. Supplements are especially beneficial for people with fat absorption issues, lactose intolerance, milk allergies, and those with darker skin tones who may have difficulty producing enough vitamin D from sun exposure.

Considerations When Choosing Vitamin D Supplements:

- **Type of vitamin D:** D3 is generally preferred.
- **Third-party certification:** Look for supplements that have been evaluated for purity, quality, and safety by an independent organization, like those we recommend through [FullScript](#).
- **Reputable brand:** Choose a brand with good manufacturing practices to ensure a safe and effective product.
- **Consult your Inspire provider:** Discuss your specific needs and the appropriate dosage with your provider before taking supplements.

It is important to note that while vitamin D supplements can effectively increase vitamin D levels, some research suggests that sun exposure may provide additional health benefits beyond vitamin D production. For example, studies suggest that vitamin D produced in the skin has antioxidant effects and may help protect against skin cancer. Additionally, sunlight exposure can trigger the production of other beneficial molecules in the skin.

Ultimately, striking a balance between safe sun exposure and, if needed, vitamin D supplementation is generally recommended to ensure adequate vitamin D levels while minimizing health risks.