



RESEARCH ROUNDUP

SUMMER GLOW GUIDE:

Vitamin D & Skin Safety

By Kelly Oong

Summer is all about sunshine, beach days, and a healthy glow. But when it comes to getting enough vitamin D and skin protection, especially if you're gluten-free, it feels like a tricky balancing act. Here's how to stay sun-smart and vitamin D-strong this summer.

Can you protect your skin and get enough vitamin D?

Absolutely. The good news is, you don't have to choose between skin safety and supporting your body with the sunshine vitamin. You can have both, without risking sun damage or a deficiency.

Why Vitamin D Matters—Especially if You're Gluten-free

Vitamin D plays a critical role in overall health. It supports calcium absorption, strengthens bones, and keeps your immune system, muscles, lungs, and brain functioning at their best. But if you're living with celiac disease, you may be at greater risk of deficiency. That's because damage to the gut lining from gluten can interfere with the absorption of key nutrients like calcium and vitamin D.

And since many gluten-free foods are not fortified, getting enough vitamin D through diet alone can be tricky. That's why this nutrient is so important to prioritize, especially during the sunny months when we have a chance to naturally soak it up.

What Is the “Sunshine Vitamin,” Exactly?

Vitamin D is often called the sunshine vitamin because your body produces it when your skin is exposed to the sun. But it's not a one-size-fits-all process. The amount of vitamin D your body makes depends on:

- ⚙️ **Time of day** - Midday exposure produces the most
- ⚙️ **Skin tone** - More melanin = slower vitamin D production
- ⚙️ **Location** - The farther you are from the equator, the less UVB reaches you
- ⚙️ **Season** - Sunlight is stronger in the spring and summer

How Much Sun Do You Need?

It doesn't take much. Experts recommend about 10–20 minutes of midday sun exposure on bare skin several times a week, depending on your skin tone, age, and where you live. After the short window, it's best to apply sunscreen to protect against sunburn, skin aging, and skin cancer.

***Pro tip:** After a short time, your body stops making additional vitamin D, so staying out longer won't boost your levels or give you more benefits, just more risk.*

Can Sunscreen Cause Vitamin D Deficiency?

Unlikely. While sunscreen can block some UVB rays needed for vitamin D synthesis, research shows that regular use doesn't significantly lower vitamin D levels. Plus, you're likely to be outdoors more during summer months than any other time of year. That said, many doctors recommend allowing a few minutes of unprotected sun exposure before applying sunscreen.

If you're at a higher risk for deficiency, due to age, location, darker skin, or a condition like celiac disease, it's a good idea to ask your doctor for a vitamin D test.

How Much Sunscreen Should You Use?

After your few minutes of unprotected sun time, it's important to apply enough sunscreen to protect your skin. Experts recommend using about one ounce—think a shot glass full—to cover your entire body. Reapply every two hours, or more often if you're swimming or sweating.

Stick to broad-spectrum formulas with SPF 30 or higher to shield against both UVA and UVB rays. That way, you can enjoy the sun safely while still supporting your body's vitamin D needs.

Beyond the Sun: How Do You Get More Vitamin D?

Sunlight isn't the only way to get your daily dose. Try combining smart sun exposure with the right foods and supplements to help ensure you're getting enough, especially if your diet is gluten-free.

Here's how to do it

- ✓ Eat fatty fish, like salmon, sardines, and tuna
- ✓ Add egg yolks and fish liver oils to your diet
- ✓ Look for fortified gluten-free foods like non-dairy milks, yogurt, or orange juice
- ✓ Take a vitamin D supplement: the general recommendation is 600 IU/day for adults, although your doctor may suggest more or less

***Pro tip:** Always take your supplement with a meal that contains fat—it helps your body absorb it better.*

Smart Summer Tips for Glow-Getters

- ⚙️ Soak up 10–20 minutes of sunshine a day, then apply sunscreen
- ⚙️ Include vitamin D-rich foods and fortified gluten-free products in your diet
- ⚙️ Supplement if needed - check with your healthcare provider
- ⚙️ Stick to your diet to support nutrient absorption
- ⚙️ Always use sun protection to prevent overexposure and sun damage

***The Bottom Line:** Whether you're catching rays, cooking up a healthy meal, or checking in with your doctor, keeping your vitamin D levels up while protecting your skin is doable. With a few mindful steps, you'll glow from the inside out all summer long. ☀️*

As always, consult a medical professional before beginning any new protocol.