



SKIN CARE WEST

MEDICAL + SURGICAL DERMATOLOGY

Two important oral vitamins and your skin

Vitamin D

We recommend supplementation with 1000 IU of vitamin D daily. That amount will ensure adequate levels in most individuals, including those who practice intensive sun protection and have a limited dietary intake of the vitamin. Those who are known to be deficient, or are at high risk for osteoporosis, may consider supplementing with up to 2000 IU daily. Doses over 4000 IU daily may be harmful and should be avoided.

An adequate supply of vitamin D is essential for many processes in our bodies. We can obtain some vitamin D from dietary sources such as fortified milk, fatty fish and egg yolks. The majority is made in our skin when it's exposed to sunlight. The duration of exposure required to produce sufficient levels depends on sun intensity, skin type, and the amount of skin exposed. In summer months, an individual with fair skin exposing their arms and legs can make enough vitamin D for the day in 10-30 minutes. For someone with darker skin it would take a bit longer. During a typical Canadian winter, it would be difficult for most of us to generate enough vitamin D through skin exposure alone. For this reason, Health Canada currently recommends that all Canadians over the age of two drink two cups of a vitamin D fortified beverage daily, and that everyone over the age of 50 also take a 400 IU vitamin D supplement. The recommendation to supplement with vitamin D is important for individuals of any age practicing intensive sun protection, since they are completely dependent on dietary sources of the vitamin and at high risk of deficiency.

Niacinamide

We recommend treatment with 500 mg niacinamide twice a day for high risk individuals, defined by extensive areas of sun damaged skin and a history of several previous skin cancers. Individuals on intensive immunosuppression, such as organ transplant patients, and who have any signs of sun damage or have had a previous skin cancer, may also benefit.

Niacinamide is an important energy source for the repair process that occurs in our skin when it is damaged by the ultraviolet component of sunlight. In recent controlled studies treatment with niacinamide has been shown to decrease the number of precancers (actinic keratoses) in sun damaged skin, and to reduce the chance of developing certain types of skin cancer. Niacin (vitamin B3) is commonly associated with flushing and would be very poorly tolerated at the high doses required for skin cancer prevention. Niacinamide is closely related, but rarely causes flushing or other side effects, and is safe to take with most medications.