

# Study: Vitamin D blood levels of Canadians, 2009-2011

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In 2009-2011, just over two-thirds of Canadians (68%) had vitamin D blood levels sufficient for healthy bones. Vitamin D is important for bone health and maintenance because it helps the body absorb calcium and phosphorus.

Vitamin D levels are measured in nanomoles per litre, which reflect the number of molecules per litre of blood. Most Canadians are considered to have sufficient levels of vitamin D for bone health at levels at or above 50 nanomoles per litre, referred to as the 'cut-off'.

The age group with the highest percentage above this cut-off was children aged 3 to 5 (89%), while the lowest percentage above the cut-off was adults aged 20 to 39 (59%).

In terms of concentrations, the youngest (aged 3 to 11) and oldest (60 to 79) age groups had the highest levels of vitamin D in their blood, and generally, females had higher levels of vitamin D than males.

About one-third (34%) of Canadians took a supplement containing vitamin D. Overall, 85% of supplement users had levels of vitamin D above the cut-off, compared with 59% who did not take supplements.

Vitamin D is unique because it can be made by the body through exposure to sunlight. During the winter months it is more difficult to produce enough vitamin D. As expected, about 60% of Canadians were above the cut-off in the winter, compared with 75% in the summer.

## Note to readers

*This release is based on an analytical article in Health at a Glance, which used data from the Canadian Health Measures Survey. This survey collects direct physical measures of the Canadian population aged 3 to 79. Data collection occurred from August 2009 to November 2011.*

## Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5071.

The article "Vitamin D blood levels of Canadians" in *Health at a Glance* (82-624-X, free), is now available from the *Key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [mediahotline@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:mediahotline@statcan.gc.ca)).

