

Free supply of vitamin D for care home residents

Background

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) generally advises that everyone, particularly the elderly, those who do not get outside and those with dark skin, should take a vitamin D supplement containing 10 micrograms (equivalent to 400 International Units (IU)) every day between October and early March to keep bones and muscles healthy. This year, this advice is more important than ever for people who have been shielding due to coronavirus (COVID-19) or people who are living in care homes, because they are more likely to have been indoors over the spring and summer and so may not have been able to obtain enough vitamin D from sunlight.

The government is providing a **free 4-month supply of vitamin D supplements** to care homes for their residents. Deliveries will be free of charge and will arrive automatically i.e. care homes do not need to apply. The supplements should be taken by the residents from when they arrive (likely mid- February) for the next 4 months. The vitamin D will be in liquid form, 2 drops of the liquid will provide 10 micrograms (400 IU), the daily recommended dose. Vitamin D is a nutritional supplement, ***care homes should NOT request a supply from the residents' GP either now or after the free 4-month supply has run out.***

For further information Care homes should refer to information provided by the government, which can be found here: [Vitamin D and care homes guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Although care homes will receive Vitamin D supplements for all their residents, **there are some groups of people for whom they may not be suitable**, due to certain medical conditions or their current medication. Each resident should have a risk assessment completed (see overleaf) to determine whether they are suitable to receive the supplement.

The vitamin D is intended as a supplement and should not be a substitute for a varied and balanced diet. Residents can choose whether to take the supplement. If they or their families require further information, the [Vitamin D Food Fact Sheet](#), produced by the British Dietetic Association, is a useful resource.

Summary of actions to be taken by Care Home staff: (see Appendix 1 for details)

- Each resident should have a risk assessment completed (see overleaf) to enable care home staff to decide whether they can be offered the vitamin D liquid supplied.
- If care home staff require support with the risk assessment, they should contact their GP or other appropriate healthcare professional. This could be done at the weekly 'home round' or alternatively a sample letter for the GP has been supplied which can be adapted for use. Supplying the GP with a list of residents requiring risk assessment might also be helpful (see sample template provided)
- We also suggest that care homes keep a log of residents with the supplements to indicate who should receive them (see Appendix 2).

For further advice please contact the Medicines Optimisation in Care Homes (MOCH) Team

Medicines.care-homes@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Resident risk assessment for free vitamin D supplement

Care Home Name			
Resident Name:		Room Number:	
Date of Birth:	NHS No:	GP:	
Assessment questions			Yes/No
Do any of the following apply to the resident (check Care Plan):			
• They are under the care of a renal, endocrinology or cancer specialist			
• They have high vitamin D levels			
• They have kidney stones (now or in the past)			
• They have too much parathyroid hormone (hyperparathyroidism)			
• They have cancer (some cancers can lead to high calcium levels)			
• They have severe kidney disease			
• They have a rare illness called sarcoidosis?			
Does the resident have an allergy to any of the ingredients listed on the free vitamin D pack supplied (<i>check MAR chart & Care Plan</i>)?			
Does the resident already take a prescribed vitamin D e.g. cholecalciferol (vitamin D3), ergocalciferol (vitamin D2), Alfacalcidol or Calcitriol (check MAR chart & Care Plan)? Brands incl. Invita D3, Fultium-D ₃ , Desunin, One-Alpha, Rocaltrol Further e.g. found in BNF			
Does the resident take a prescribed vitamin D supplement in combination with calcium? (check MAR chart and Care Plan) Brands incl. Accrete D3, Adcal-D ₃ , Calceos, Calci-D, Calcichew-D ₃ , Evacal D3 Further e.g. found in BNF			
Does the resident have any swallowing problems that mean they cannot take the liquid vitamin D provided (unless they have a PEG/NG tube which can be used to administer the drops – seek advice from a pharmacist) (<i>check MAR chart & Care Plan</i>)?			
Date of assessment:		Completed by:	

If the answer to ANY of the questions above is YES or care staff are UNSURE about the answer:

- **Do NOT offer** the resident the vitamin D supplement
- If required, seek further advice from the resident's GP, the MOCH team or other healthcare professional at their next appointment or the care home's Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meeting. It is not necessary to contact the resident's GP or other healthcare professional about the vitamin D supplements prior to their next appointment/MDT meeting
- Care staff may wish to explain to the resident why they are not being offered the supplement

If the answer to ALL the questions is NO:

- **Offer** the resident the choice to take the vitamin D supplied.
- Care home providers should incorporate this provision into existing routines and care plans according to guidance [here](#)
- Record administration. Refer to **Section 3.3 Record of provision** in the guidance [here](#), for options 2

Consent: Before residents can receive their vitamin D, they will need to give their consent (if they have capacity) or consent will be required from the LPOA or via a best interests decision. See **Section 2.3** in the guidance [here](#)

Consent has been given/withheld by the resident, LPOA or best interests decision (circle as appropriate)

Signature **Date**

Name and signature of assessor **Date**

Appendix 1: Free supply of vitamin D – action list for care home staff

Task
Read vitamin D guidance document from the government https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vitamin-d-for-vulnerable-groups/vitamin-d-and-care-homes-guidance
Add procedure to your medicines' policy
Check the product seal is in place after delivery and check the expiry date
Initially store the vitamin D supplements in the medicines cupboard until the bottles have been allocated to individual residents, after which time they can be stored with the residents' other medication
Complete the risk assessment for each resident to determine which residents are suitable to take vitamin D. Seek support from the GP or other healthcare professionals if needed. <i>(See sample letter and patient list template for GPs)</i>
Once the risk assessment has been completed, this should be documented in the resident's care plan
For the residents assessed as being <u>suitable</u> to obtain the supplement
Seek consent from the resident if they have capacity or from the LPOAH or via a best interests' decision <i>NB Residents can choose whether they wish to take the supplement</i>
Select where the administration of vitamin D will be recorded e.g. MAR chart (recommended), Care Plan or nutritional notes, according to the care homes medicines policy. The dose for all people is 2 drops (10 micrograms or 400 International Units) daily
It is recommended that each bottle is labelled with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident's name • Date of Birth • Date the bottle was first opened • Expiry date – 5 months from opening <p>As the bottle is very small, it may be necessary to 'flag' the label It is not sufficient to only label the box as the box and bottle may become separated <i>(Please see example photo and labels in separate PDF document)</i></p>
The vitamin D supplement should be administered daily at a time most appropriate for the individual resident.
For residents assessed as being <u>unsuitable</u> to receive the vitamin D supplement, or if consent has been withheld
Add the risk assessment to the residents' Care Plan
Consider explaining to the resident why they are not receiving the vitamin D supplement

