Private and confidential
<Patient Name>
<Patient Address>
<Today's date>
NHS no <NHS number>

Dear «PatientName»

Important information about your repeat prescription

We note from our records that we are prescribing you a high dose vitamin D supplement called colecalciferol *insert brand name if known and strength*. Vitamin D helps regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body. These nutrients are needed to keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy. After a course of the high strength, you can step down to a low strength maintenance dose of vitamin D.

The NHS has to make difficult choices about what it spends taxpayer money on and how much value the taxpayer is getting for that money. NHS England has published guidance about reducing the prescribing of vitamins that are available to buy over the counter.

Vitamin D is a food supplement, widely available to purchase at low cost from supermarkets, health food shops and pharmacies. Therefore, Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board does not support the prescribing of food supplements where they are readily available to purchase. You no longer need to take the high strength vitamin D, so your prescription for this will now be stopped. The enclosed information leaflet should help you to choose a suitable product to purchase.

The NHS advises all adults to take a vitamin D 10µg (microgram) supplement daily during the autumn and winter months. Certain groups of people are more at risk of developing vitamin D deficiency and are recommended to take a vitamin D supplement all year round. This includes:

- Pregnant and breastfeeding women
- People over 65 years of age
- People who are not exposed to much sun, e.g., those who cover their skin for cultural reasons, those that are housebound or in a care home.
- People from African, African-Caribbean and South Asian backgrounds

If you need advice about choosing a vitamin D product, your community pharmacy team will be able to help. More information about vitamin D supplementation can be found in the enclosed leaflet. A copy of your repeat prescription has been included for your information.

Should you have any other queries about this medication change please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0800 389 6819 or email sneeicb-nee.pals@nhs.net

Yours Sincerely

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Information on Vitamin D supplements for adults

Why is Vitamin D important?

Vitamin D helps regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body. These nutrients are needed to keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy. Low vitamin D levels are linked to conditions such as rickets in children, osteoporosis and bone pain caused by a condition called osteomalacia (soft bones) in adults.

Many people with low vitamin D may have no symptoms or may complain of only vague ones such as tiredness or general aches.

Do I need to take a vitamin D supplement?

From late March/early April to the end of September, the majority of people can make all the vitamin D they need through daily sunlight on their skin for 10-15 minutes. However, it is difficult for people to get enough vitamin D during autumn and winter, so the NHS recommends that everyone considers taking a daily vitamin D 10µg (microgram) supplement during these seasons.

Certain groups of people are more at risk of developing vitamin D deficiency as they may not be able to make enough vitamin D through the year. The following groups are recommended to take a vitamin D supplement **all year round**.

- Pregnant and breastfeeding women
- People over 65 years of age
- People who are not exposed to much sun, e.g., those who cover their skin for cultural reasons, those that are housebound or in a care home.
- People from African, African-Caribbean and South Asian backgrounds

Good sources of vitamin D

The body creates vitamin D from direct sunlight on the skin when outdoors, but between October and early March we don't make enough vitamin D from sunlight.

Vitamin D is found in a small number of foods. Sources include:

- Oily fish – such as salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel
- Red meat
- Liver
- Egg yolks
- Fortified foods – such as some fat spreads, some plant-based milk and breakfast cereals.

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How much vitamin D should I take?

- Adults who are more at r.isk of developing vitamin D deficiency (as identified in the previous page) should take 10µg (microgram) daily of vitamin D all year round.
- All adults should consider taking 10µg (microgram) daily of vitamin D during autumn and winter.

Where can I purchase vitamin D supplements and how much might they cost?

Vitamin D supplements are widely available from pharmacies, health food shops and supermarkets at a low cost. Prices vary depending upon brand and strength.

Healthy start vitamins

If you are more than 10 weeks pregnant you may be entitled to free healthy start vitamins which include vitamin D. Ask your midwife for more information on how to obtain these.

Further Information

You community pharmacy team will be able to help you with any queries you may have regarding vitamin D.

Further information can be found below.

- NHS. Vitamin D. Last reviewed August 2020. https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/
- British Dietetic Association - The Association of UK Dieticians. Vitamin D: Food Fact Sheet. August 2019. https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/vitamin-d.html
- British Skin Foundation. Sunlight and vitamin D. https://www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk/sunlight-and-vitamin-d Accessed 12 July 2023
- Healthy start https://www.gov.uk/healthy-start Accessed 12 July 2023