

Vitamin D for care home residents

Information on DHSC guidance for Care Providers

Vitamin D supplements are due to be sent to all care homes in the next few weeks from the DHSC. This will be a liquid preparation with two drops giving 10 micrograms (400 IU) of Vitamin D.

The DHSC has produced advice for care home providers on the use of these supplements. This guidance must be read and followed carefully <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vitamin-d-for-vulnerable-groups/vitamin-d-and-care-homes-guidance>

Summary of the guidance

- Care home providers should offer the vitamin D supplements as part of the home's requirement to meet the resident's full nutritional needs.
- Care home providers must carry out a safety check using the MAR chart and the resident's care notes to identify any residents where the supplement may not be appropriate.
- If, following the safety check, the care provider does not have sufficient information or the resident falls into one of the groups listed in section 2 of the guidance then advice should be obtained from a health care professional at the next appointment before offering the supplement.
- People who should not be offered the vitamin D supplements without advice from a healthcare professional include
 - those already taking a vitamin D supplement,
 - those with known allergies to the ingredients of the vitamin D supplement,
 - those with certain medical conditions (listed in section 2.1.2 of the guidance) and
 - those with swallowing difficulties.
- Care home providers should ensure they have informed consent from the resident or a best interests decision in line with the Mental Capacity Act involving the relevant people if the person lacks capacity.

CQC has also published guidance on offering vitamin D supplements. <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/vitamin-d-supplements-supporting-people-who-receive-adult>

Information to help put the guidance into practice.

- The supplements should be offered in line with the DSHC guidance so you do **not** need separate authorisation from the GP or other health care professional to give the Vitamin D.
- For those residents where section 2 of the guidance indicates that you **do** need to seek advice from a healthcare professional this should be done as a routine non-urgent query. The guidance says at “the resident’s next appointment” but if there is no appointment due it would be acceptable to use your usual processes for a non urgent query instead. Starting the supplements can be delayed until the information is received.
- The healthcare professional who provides the advice does not need to be the person’s GP. You may have been given a contact in the Primary Care Network for routine clinical queries, for example.
- You must make a record of any advice obtained including the name and professional designation of the healthcare professional contacted.
- Check the patient information leaflet of medication to see if it contains vitamin D or closely related substance (analogue).
 - Some names that may be listed as well as or instead of Vitamin D are colecalciferol, alfacalcidol or ergocalciferol. Less frequently calcitriol, calcipotriol, dihydrotachysterol, paricalcitol or tacalcitol. If you are not sure please check with a healthcare professional.
- Vitamin D is often found in combination with calcium as well as on its own. It may also be found in some prescribed topical preparations such as creams and ointments.
- If the person is already taking a prescribed vitamin D medicine do not give the vitamin D food supplement. The person should continue to take the prescribed medication.
- If the person is using a topical prescribed vitamin D product contact a healthcare professional to discuss whether the vitamin D supplement should be given with these medicines.
- If the person is already taking an over the counter medicine or food supplement that contains vitamin D do not offer the free supplements as well. If the amount of vitamin D in the person’s own supplement is less than 10micrograms they may wish to consider changing to one that contains 10micrograms instead.
- Check the ingredient list for the vitamin D supplement against the list of known allergies for the person and do not give if there is an allergy seen. Depending on the allergy seen the person may wish to consider alternative products. Your community pharmacist may be able help to identify a suitable product.

- You must record any vitamin D given to a resident. We would suggest the MAR chart as the most practical option. Record the details of the product as stated on the product packaging and make sure you write down the amount to be given.
- Vitamin D should be stored safely and in line with the information on the product packaging including at the correct temperature. Keeping it with the person's medication would be a practical option.
- Check the product packaging to see if there is a short shelf life once opened. If there is - put the date of opening on the product. Check regularly that it is still within its useable shelf life.
- The guidance suggests putting the name of the person on their individual supply of the vitamin D supplement. Use the person's full name (not just initials which could be confused with another resident).
- Update your policy to include how vitamin D supplements will be supported.

The MMT can be contacted via the VOYCCG.Rxline@nhs.net if you need support on implementing the guidance.