

Vitamin A

Vitamin A supplements are taken to prevent vitamin A deficiency (although this is rare in the UK).

You should not take vitamin A supplements if you are pregnant.

About vitamin A

Type of medicine	Vitamin A
Used for	To prevent or treat vitamin A deficiency
Also called	Retinol
Available as	Capsules or drops (multivitamin)

Vitamin A is a vitamin which is important for healthy eyes, good eyesight and a healthy skin. It also helps you to fight infections.

Your doctor may recommend that you (or your child) take a supplement of vitamin A if you cannot get sufficient from your normal diet, or if you are at risk of [vitamin A deficiency](#) for some other reason. Vitamin A supplements usually contain other vitamins also, such as vitamin D and vitamin C. They are available to buy without a prescription.

Before taking vitamin A

To make sure that this is the right treatment for you, before you start taking vitamin A it is important that you speak with your doctor or pharmacist:

- If you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breastfeeding. This is because you are advised **not** to take vitamin A supplements during pregnancy or if you are breastfeeding, unless prescribed by a doctor.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.
- If you are taking other medicines, including those available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines. It is particularly important that you say if you are taking a retinoid preparation (such as isotretinoin) for a skin condition.

How to take vitamin A

- Before you start taking a vitamin A supplement, please read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack.
- Vitamin supplements are usually taken once a day. Your doctor, pharmacist or health visitor will tell you how much you (or your child) should take. The dose will also be on the label of the pack. You can take vitamin supplements at whatever time of day you find easiest to remember. They can be taken either before or after meals.
- Do not take more than the dose which has been recommended or prescribed.

Getting the most from your treatment

- Foods that contain vitamin A are eggs, milk, liver and fish-liver oils. Another substance called beta-carotene (which is found in green leafy and orange/yellow vegetables and fruits) can be converted by your body into vitamin A and so is also a good source. Try to regularly include some of these foods in your meals.
- Just a reminder that you should not take vitamin A supplements if you are (or think you may be) pregnant. This includes taking fish-liver oil preparations. This is because there is evidence to suggest that high levels of vitamin A can cause problems in babies. Also, you should not eat liver or liver-containing foods such as liver pâté or liver sausage because they too contain a lot of vitamin A.

- Before buying or taking any 'over-the-counter' medicines, please check with a pharmacist which medicines are safe for you to take alongside vitamin A.

Can vitamin A cause problems?

Although vitamin A is unlikely to cause any side-effects at the recommended doses, large overdoses can be associated with unwanted effects. If you experience any symptoms which you think may be due to the medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

How to store vitamin A

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

Important information about all medicines

If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are taking.

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital for advice. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Do not give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about the medicine ask your pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

Further reading

- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.
- [Manufacturer's PIL, Retinol and Colecalciferol 4500 IU/450 IU Soft Gel Capsules \(Vitamin A & D\)](#); Tor Generics Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated February 2017.

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