Introduction

According to the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) Drug Schedule database, Vitamin D is considered a Schedule 1 drug and would require a prescription when:

For human use - in oral dosage form containing more than 1,000 International Units of Vitamin D per dosage form or, where the largest recommended daily dosage shown on the label would, if consumed by a person, result in the daily intake by that person of more than 1,000 International Units of Vitamin D. Is a Schedule 1 drug (effective December 2013).


Vitamin D products that are readily found on the shelves in health food stores and pharmacies are not scheduled under NAPRA. These products typically contain 200 IU, 400 IU or 800 IU per pill. A daily dose of one to two pills is usually recommended on the label of such products. Because the labelled recommendation is not exceeding 1000 IU per day, it does not constitute a Schedule I drug, requiring a prescription. Even if the product were to contain 1000 IU pills, it would still be unscheduled. It is only a Schedule I drug, requiring a prescription, when one pill equals greater than 1000 IU, or the daily dosage on the label exceeds 1000 IU/day (and therefore not available on the shelf).

The College of Dietitians of Alberta acknowledges and supports that Registered Dietitians (RDs) make recommendations for daily vitamin D doses greater than 1000 IU.

When recommending that clients take a higher daily dose of vitamin D, for example 2400IU/day, RDs can suggest products to look for (for example, a pill dosage of 400 IU or 800 IU). In this example, the daily recommended dose can be made up of either 3 x 800 IU pills or 6x 400 IU pills. RDs may write down the recommended daily vitamin D regimen for clients, suggesting the client purchase the product and take it according to their recommendations.

Communication and collaboration with the interprofessional health care team is important practice of RDs when making high-dose vitamin D recommendations (See Standards of Practice 4. Collaborative Practice and 5. Communication). The College also suggests RDs consider risk management and monitoring procedures or processes when making a recommendation over the upper tolerable limits for vitamin D (Tolerable Upper Intake Level for children age 8 and older,
adults and during pregnancy and lactation is 4000 IU/day), in view that it is a fat-soluble vitamin and may pose some risk in high doses longer term.

**What You Need to Know**

RDs can make recommendations for their clients to take vitamin D above 1000 IU, without requiring a prescription. The client then purchases the product and takes the number of pills per dosage, per day as recommended by the RD.

When doing so, the RD’s recommendation for vitamin D must be based on client need and evidence. It must be done in a manner that does not recommend vitamin D > 1000 IU per single pill dose. It must be done in a manner that facilitates interprofessional collaboration, risk management /monitoring protocols, and appropriate documentation.

*Created: November 2020*

**References:**

