

Vitamin D – You probably aren't getting enough.

Australia is the sunny country (although it's been too rainy this summer) so you would think that we would be getting enough Vitamin D. But it seems that more and more people are deficient in this important vitamin.

Vitamin D3 has many roles in the body. It is most famous for its importance in bone health. It helps to put calcium into bones so is important for the prevention of osteoporosis, and it makes muscles stronger which helps to reduce falls. Recently, the increase in vitamin D deficiency has correlated with the increased frequency of rickets in children, a condition which we thought had been eradicated in the 1950s.

Vitamin D3 plays an important role in our immune system. It is involved in our ability to fight infections as it 'switches on' our immune cells. Auto-immune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, crohns disease, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) are also often associated with a vitamin D deficiency and supplementation has shown benefit in these conditions.

There is also research that shows that obese people are more likely to have a vitamin D deficiency. A deficiency also makes it harder to lose weight, most likely due to its relationship with blood glucose control and inflammation.

The main source of Vitamin D is sunlight, however there are many factors that affect the amount of UVB absorbed by the skin, such as latitude, season, sunblock, certain skin creams, skin colour, age and clothing. Our diet provides us with some, and in Australia vitamin D is mostly found in fatty fish, eggs and fortified margarines. Relying on these as a sole source of vitamin D is unlikely to bring vitamin D levels up to a healthy range.



The best thing to do is test your vitamin D levels with a blood test, and supplement accordingly.

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