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THE FIT FACTOR

LIFESTYLE CHANGE

In the UK it can be challenging to obtain enough vitamin D solely from dietary sources during the winter months due to limited sunlight, therefore it is recommended to take a daily supplement. Short-term vitamin D deficiency can lead to symptoms like fatigue, muscle weakness and mood changes.

FITNESS TIP

Incorporate outdoor workouts into your routine; running, cycling or bootcamps in the sun can help your body produce vitamin D. Last week, temperatures in the North East were unusually up to 20 degrees, so there can still be good opportunities to raise your body's vitamin D levels.

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AS the nights lengthen and the daylight hours shorten, it becomes increasingly crucial to ensure our bodies receive the essential nutrients required for maintaining good health.

This is where vitamin D steps in – a supplement endorsed by both the NHS and the UK government for all residents during the winter season. Vitamin D plays a vital role, supporting the health of our bones, teeth, and muscles.

Short-term vitamin D deficiency can lead to symptoms like fatigue, muscle weakness and mood changes. In severe cases, it may cause muscle cramps and spasms.

According to the NHS, a deficiency in this vitamin more long term can result in conditions like rickets in children, characterised by deformities, and osteomalacia in adults, leading to bone pain.

Our primary source of vitamin D is sunlight, and in the UK, we receive adequate sunlight for our bodies to produce vitamin D between April and September.

According to NHS guidelines, individuals aged one year and

above, including pregnant and breastfeeding women and those at risk of vitamin D deficiency, require a daily intake of 10 micrograms of vitamin D. Babies up to one year old need 8.5 to 10 micrograms daily.

Putting this into context, one microgram is 1,000 times smaller than a milligram (mg), and vitamin D amounts are sometimes expressed in International Units (IU), with 1 microgram equating to 40 IU. Therefore, 10 micrograms of vitamin D is equivalent to 400 IU.

Vitamin D is naturally present in oily fish, red meat, liver and egg yolks, and it is often added to products such as breakfast cereals and margarine spreads.

As per the British Heart Foundation, a 140g serving of baked salmon contains 10.2 micrograms, a bowl of fortified bran flakes provides 1.5 micrograms, and a single egg yields 1.9 micrograms of vitamin D.

Vitamin D is present in:

- Oily fish like salmon, sardines, herring, and mackerel;
- Red meat;
- Liver;
- Egg yolks;

■ Fortified foods such as select margarine spreads and breakfast cereals.

In the UK, cow's milk is generally not a substantial source of vitamin D because it is not commonly fortified as it is in some other countries.

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Who should consider taking a vitamin D supplement?

Guidelines for adults and children above the age of four:

It is advisable for everyone, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, to contemplate taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D during the autumn and winter months.

Recommendations for individuals at risk of vitamin D deficiency

Some individuals may not receive sufficient vitamin D from sunlight exposure due to limited outdoor activity or specific circumstances, such as being frail, confined to a care facility, or wearing concealing clothing when outdoors. The



> Lack of sunshine can lead to Vitamin D deficiency

Department of Health and Social Care recommends adults and children over four years old take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D throughout the year if they fall into these categories.

People with darker skin, includ-

ing those with African, African-Caribbean, or South Asian backgrounds, may also struggle to produce adequate vitamin D from sunlight and should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms throughout the year.