Community Health Stores



Sharing a commitment to healthy communities

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VITAMIN D

HELPING WITH THE SUNNIER SIDE OF LIFE

What is the big deal with Vitamin D?

Surely, if we spend time in the sun, we will get all we need. It is true that vitamin D is known as the sunshine vitamin because our body can manufacture it when our skin is exposed to sunlight, and on the plus side, it may help with 'a sunnier mood'. But circumstances need to be right for our bodies to manufacture this vital nutrient. Forget sitting in the car on a sunny day, or in front of a window hoping to top up your vitamin D levels. We need direct ultraviolet B (UVB) from the sun rays to target the cholesterol in skin cells to trigger the start of vitamin D synthesis.

Vitamin D also is absorbed in the intestine from some high fat foods such as butter, oily fish and eggs, so a healthy digestive system is vital. Vitamin D deficiency can be silent, with symptoms often going unrecognized.

Individuals who feel exhausted, experience muscle stiffness or weakness, mood

changes, thinning hair or are prone to nasty bugs, may benefit from a blood test to check their D levels. Many experts recommend a level between 30 and 50 ng/ml. If the test results are lower, then additional vitamin D rich foods and supplementation is suggested.

At all stages of our life vitamin D is needed, critical for strong healthy bones due to the connection with calcium and phosphorus absorption. Both minerals are essential for building and maintaining bone and teeth health. While health researchers have linked it with having a positive effect on our immune health...

The New Zealand sun is incredibly harsh, and with our high skin cancer rates, many of us are sun-shy or shield ourselves with sun lotion, sun protective clothing to avoid sunburn.

There are several groups of people who are more prone to low vitamin D levels:

those individuals that don't absorb fat well, those with a darker skin pigment, people who have had a gastric bypass, children who don't play outside, as well as those who actively avoid sun exposure due to a high risk of skin cancer.

As we age, our ability to synthesize vitamin D also decreases, so often the elderly is one of the most common groups of people with inadequate levels. Hence it is more common that this group have symptoms such as low bone density, increased risk of bone fractures, poor immune health and low mood, muscle stiffness or weakness, especially in the winter months.

It is easy to supplement with Solgar's range of vitamin D3. You can choose from a range of doses, softgel or chewable options.

Pop into any Community Health Store for more information.

