



STEP INTO THE SUNSHINE

Many people have insufficient blood levels of vitamin D. Based on new recommendations as a minimum for sufficiency, more than half the people in Australia and New Zealand are deficient.

Interestingly, in Australia, 20- to 39-year-olds have the lowest levels of vitamin D, followed by the elderly. A lack of vitamin D has also been identified as a problem in other Western societies.

why you need vitamin D

Low levels of this D-lightful nutrient are linked with a litany of health problems, ranging from multiple sclerosis to osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, rickets, heart disease, diabetes, depression and several kinds of cancers.

You are at high risk of deficiency if you are older, ill, spend more time indoors (working, watching TV, playing computer games), live in a capital city, have darker skin, cover up most of the time or are overweight. Vitamin D is trapped in fat tissue, so people with obesity need two to three times more than people of normal weight.

how to get enough

Vitamin D is rarely obtained from food, unless you regularly eat oily fish or use fortified products, which are more common in some countries. Newly available vitamin D mushrooms (cultivated mushrooms exposed briefly

to a beam of light to stimulate vitamin D production) are a useful source, especially for vegetarians.

Experts believe you need 25 micrograms (1000 IU) of vitamin D per day to maintain healthy blood levels. You can also get this through supplements or, better still, by sunning yourself.

Short exposure to your arms and legs on most days is best for maintenance. Get out into the sun for about 10 minutes during the summer months or for 20 minutes during winter.

Be aware that the required time for exposure to the sun will vary according to latitude and your skin type. Sunscreen will also block vitamin D production.

See **page 59** for a vitamin D-rich recipe idea.

Food source	Vitamin D (mcg)
2 large eggs	0.8
100 g oily fish	1–2
250 ml vitamin D fortified milk/soy	2.5–5.0
100 g vitamin D mushrooms	20

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and co-author of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information.