Does everyone need to take a vitamin D supplement?

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**Rob Lilley-Jones:** You may have heard that everyone should take vitamin D. But what's the science behind that? And are some brands better than others? Let's find out on this podcast from which, hello, I'm Rob Lily Jones, and I'll be with you for the final three episodes in this series aimed to help you live better every day.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** Now, if you haven't heard any of our episodes so far, or watched any on our YouTube channel, make sure to go back and have a listen. Or have a watch 'cause we've already covered some fascinating topics in the world of health and wellbeing. Specifically focusing. On supplements and today is no different. Of course, I've already mentioned we are talking vitamin D and I'm doing so once again with our brilliant guest joining me in the studio.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** We of course have Shefali Lth public health nutritionist here at which Shefali welcome.

**Shefalee Loth:** Hi Rob,

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** and we are also joined once again by the brilliant Sophie Melin consultant, dietician and founder of city Dieticians. Welcome.

**Sophie Medlin:** Hi. Thanks for having me.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** It's great to have you both here. Thank you for being here.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** Now, vitamin D today, the one thing that I know is that we can get it from the sun, but it's also in a supplement, so. What is it exactly and what can it do for us?

**Sophie Medlin:** Okay. Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin, so it's just part of our range of vitamins that we need to have in our bodies, and it's really well known for its importance in bone health, so it helps to direct calcium to our bones and make sure that our bones can stay strong, but it's also really important for immunity, which is particularly of interest at this time of year.

**Sophie Medlin:** And it's also important for our brain health and mental health in general. So it's got loads of really important roles in the body, um, that have been perhaps neglected until quite recently because we didn't realize that unless we're getting it from sunlight, we are gonna struggle to get enough of it.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** Is there, is there a leak table of vitamins and if there was, is vitamin D towards the top just given some of the stuff you just said?

**Sophie Medlin:** Yeah, I mean, I would say because it's so difficult to get it from food or enough of it from food, particularly if your skin is darker. We do need to take it in supplement form.

**Sophie Medlin:** So it is something that we're more aware of and that we are taking more seriously as nutrition professionals for sure.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** Right. So you mentioned there it's difficult to get from food shefali. Can you get it from food and if so, which foods?

**Shefalee Loth:** You can get it from food, but as Sophie says, you can't get enough from food.

**Shefalee Loth:** So really, um. In terms of food sources, you are thinking oily fish. Um, some dairy products will have it in. Some foods are fortified with vitamin D and then some mushrooms that are grown in particular conditions will have vitamin D in too. But actually. It's really, really difficult, ion impossible, I'd say, to get enough from your diet.

**Shefalee Loth:** Now you did mention sun, so we can get some vitamin D or enough vitamin D from the sun in specific months in the uk. So that's between May and September. So really outside of those, between October and April, really everyone should be taking a vitamin D supplement.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** So I mean, obviously we're talking. In the autumn.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** We have actually had quite a good summer, you know, at this time we're talking here in, in the uk. But is it safe to say that the UK is probably more deficient in vitamin D as a population than, than maybe, you know, Spain for example, or Greece or some of those Mediterranean countries?

**Sophie Medlin:** Yeah, absolutely. I think that the research.

**Sophie Medlin:** When they were looking at how much vitamin D or how much sunlight I should say we need to get to get enough vitamin D, they were looking at people standing out for an hour in the midday sun in Spain, in the summertime. So what they found from that is that the darker your skin, the longer you need to stay out for, and the lighter your skin, the less time and sun exposure you need to get enough vitamin D.

**Sophie Medlin:** And I think what that really speaks to is that we, in this country, we work indoors. 99% of the time most people work indoors. Often people also cover up for cultural or religious reasons, or because of trying to prevent sun damage, for example. And so actually it's really difficult for most people to get enough vitamin D, but again, the darker your skin tone, the more sun exposure you need to get enough vitamin D, and that puts certain demographics of people at higher risk.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** Now, I mean, full disclosure, we are talking in our windowless basement, so we, we are not getting much of our daily vitamin D at the time at which we're talking here, given everything we've said. Then. It sounds like we should be taking a vitamin D supplement. Should everyone be taking vitamin D?

**Shefalee Loth:** Yeah. The NHS recommends that everybody takes a vitamin D supplement between the months of October and April, and that's children and adults.

**Shefalee Loth:** And then if you belong to certain demographics, so if you have darker skin or if you spend a lot of time inside, such as if you're elderly. Or also if you cover up your skin quite a lot, then if you belong to one of those groups, really you should think about taking a supplement all year round.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** I mean, this is fascinating because it's not something I've ever done so already.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** Just obviously having this conversation that's making me think, you know, this is clearly something that I should, should think about doing. And obviously later on in the episode we will get onto some of the Vitamin D supplements that we of course have been looking at here at which. It sounds like it's very, very important that we get the right amount.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** So if we aren't getting the right amount of vitamin D, if we are deficient, what are some of the negative consequences for us and for our wellbeing?

**Sophie Medlin:** Hmm. So I suppose some of the symptoms of vitamin D deficiency would be often muscular aches or feeling like particularly tired and lethargic, also getting sick all the time.

**Sophie Medlin:** So get catching every virus that goes around. And then mood changes I would expect to see as well. And it's. Quite surprising how frequently people are found to be vitamin D deficient. Lots of people listening to it. This may have been found to be vitamin D deficient from their GP and put on supplements by their gp.

**Sophie Medlin:** So it's quite a common deficiency in the UK as we've discussed. And so those are some of the, the symptoms that you might expect to see and feel. If it's allowed to go on for too long, it can, you know, your immunity can be further worn down, your mood can be further worn down, but also you can develop bone density problems.

**Sophie Medlin:** So osteoporosis osteopenia, which is like pre osteoporosis, can start to occur. And you know, the good news is a lot of that is reversible with enough vitamin D and supplementation.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** So that sounds like then I, I know we've touched on this already, but. Older people, really important children as well is important for them.

**Sophie Medlin:** Yeah, I think they say that babies have to have vitamin D drops as well, don't they? Yeah,

**Shefalee Loth:** basically. Um, if you are, if you are breastfeeding your baby, then really they should be getting vitamin D drops from six months on. Um, and if your baby is formula fed, then actually formula tends to be fortified with vitamin D, so you don't need to add it on top.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** And before we get into the specifics of, of some of the brands out there as, as well, and the ones that we've been looking into. There are different types of supplements or, or rather different ways that we can take vitamin D. So, you know, we've got tablets, we've got gummies, we've got sprays. Do you mind just sort of talking us through, you know, some of those different options out there and, and I dunno if some are, are better than others, or, or whether they're just different, different things for different people.

**Sophie Medlin:** Yeah, so vitamin D comes in lots of different forms, like other supplements now. So sometimes there'll be in a capsule and hopefully there'll be oil in that capsule, which helps with absorption of the vitamin D. Sometimes it's in tablet form and there's unlikely to be oil in there, so it's important to take that with food.

**Sophie Medlin:** Mouth sprays are absorbed through the lining of the mouth itself, so they're particularly good for people who have, for example, gastrointestinal problems, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, or rare. Celiac disease, for example. So if you have any digestive issues, then a mouth spray is a good idea for you.

**Sophie Medlin:** They also come in effervescence, so it ends up as a drink. I think that might be overkill in terms of the number of additives that have to be put in there to make it taste good and to work as an effervescent, but that's a personal preference thing. People don't like to tablets sometimes, and then there's the gummies.

**Sophie Medlin:** And you know, full disclosure, I'm not a fan of gummies because you have to put so many other ingredients in there to make it into what is essentially a sweet, and with vitamin D and other things, there are plenty of other options, like a mouth spray for children or for whoever can't take a tablet, which would do really well.

**Sophie Medlin:** So it's just about thinking about what's best for you and your family and what you'll routinely take and what can build into a good habit for you.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** Presumably with gummies then there's, there's quite a lot of sugar in there potentially as well.

**Sophie Medlin:** Sugar or sweeteners. And then there's usually colorings and flavorings and stabilizers and all sorts of other things in there as well.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** And you mentioned effervescence and then now having said earlier on, I don't think I've ever taken a vitamin D supplement. Maybe I have. Is this the sort of dissolvable from the well-known brands that we probably know you, you put it in the bottom of a glass, you add some water, and then. It. It becomes bright orange and I mean maybe too much information, but then also, so does your we.

**Sophie Medlin:** I think that the one you are thinking of maybe doesn't contain vitamin D. I'm not a hundred percent sure, but I know it contains some B vitamins and vitamin C, but I'm not sure it contains vitamin D. Which brings us on to an important point actually, is that. Lots of different foods do contain vitamin D and lots of different supplements contain vitamin D, so you do have to be a bit careful not to take too much if you're taking it in one supplement form and then it's elsewhere as well in your diet or in your other supplements you're taking.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** Now, this is something that's come up before on some of our earlier episodes, the issue around. Obviously we've, we've talked about not taking enough and being deficient in, in vitamin D in this case, but, but taking too much. What could some of the consequences be of, of taking too much vitamin D?

**Shefalee Loth:** Well, the NHS recommends that the upper limit or the upper safe limit for vitamin D is a hundred micrograms a day, and really people shouldn't be taking in excess of that over long periods.

**Shefalee Loth:** Now, if you are deficient, your GP might. Prescribe a short course of really high dose vitamin D, but really you don't want to be taking that over a prolonged period of time. The risk of taking too much vitamin D is actually calcification of your vessels. Um, which obviously is a serious, it sounds very serious.

**Shefalee Loth:** Yeah.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** And also I was just reading, obviously you've got vitamin D as an overall term. But there's vitamin D two and vitamin D three. I mean, what are the differences between those two?

**Sophie Medlin:** Vitamin D two needs to be converted in the body into vitamin D three for it to be active and used within the body, and so it's sort of the less.

**Sophie Medlin:** Bioavailable is a term we would use less bioavailable form of vitamin D. So ideally, when we're looking at a vitamin D supplement, we want the most bioavailable form, which is vitamin D three,

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** and there's also vitamin K. What is vitamin K? I know we're talking about vitamin D obviously on this podcast, but it sounds like vitamin K we need to touch on as well.

**Sophie Medlin:** There's been a lot of interesting press and research into the importance of taking vitamin D and vitamin K together over recent years. Now, this research is really still early, so we're not a hundred percent sure. What we think to be true is that if you're taking a high dose of vitamin D, it's a good idea to take vitamin K with it.

**Sophie Medlin:** The vitamin K can help to stop the vitamin D from calcifying, the vessels in our body, our blood vessels, and direct it appropriately to our bones. But it seems from the research that's happened so far that if you are on a moderate or low dose of vitamin D, it's not so important. And we can get plenty of vitamin K from our diet as long as we're eating lots of leafy, as long as we're eating lots of leafy greens and other healthy foods.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** And I feel like. Obviously we have to touch on this because I think we've pretty much touched on it on every single one of our episodes so far, the world of misinformation that's out there. You mentioned Sophie with Vitamin K, research is still early when research is still being formed. That can allow a bit of a loophole for some influence to get involved and maybe put some stuff out there that that is disproven, and I'm sure it's the same with with vitamin K and vitamin D.

**Shefalee Loth:** Yeah, well I, I think back to COVID and, you know, there was a lot of hype around vitamin D during COVID about how it could prevent illness or pr and actually, you know, that was unfounded. Obviously vitamin D is linked to immunity, so that's probably where it. The claims or the idea came from, but obviously what they were then hugely exaggerated.

**Shefalee Loth:** Now, I think vitamin D isn't one of the things where there's a lot of fake news or hype, unnecessary hype

**Sophie Medlin:** about what do you think? No, I agree, but I think that the, the main thing with vitamin D is that. Uh, manufacturers of supplements and, and products in general, protein powders, et cetera, we'll put it in everything 'cause they can make some nice health claims about it.

**Sophie Medlin:** And so it really is important if you're taking a stack of different things, even if it's collagen and a multivitamin and vitamin D and you know, protein powder, whatever it might be, just check that there's not vitamin D and absolutely everything that you're taking. 'cause it really can add up and then you can end up in trouble.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** And, and are there any dangers there from, I mean obviously there's dangers from taking too much as we've touched on, but are there any dangers from, you know, these food manufacturers, for example, just. Putting vitamin D in, in whatever they like. Presumably it's, it's regulated. It is regulated, is it

**Sophie Medlin:** Not really.

**Sophie Medlin:** I mean certainly in food products, you, you, you can put it in a food product and it can be then a fortified food. But really people can put it in anything. And one of the things that worries me is some of the big supplement manufacturers might sort of have. A magnesium and this and that and that, and they've all got a bit of vitamin D in them.

**Sophie Medlin:** And then people are sort of encouraged to take them as a whole stack. And then before you know it, you've ended up having far too much of something like vitamin D.

**Shefalee Loth:** I think

**Sophie Medlin:** it

**Shefalee Loth:** is important to say though, it will be labeled on the pack, so it is not like you're gonna be unwittingly taking vitamin D, so just check the ingredients.

**Shefalee Loth:** Check the back label and you can then add up to see how much you are getting over a day.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** And this might sound like a, a silly question, but hopefully it's not, hopefully people listening to this will be thinking the same thing. You mentioned looking on the, the food labels there to see what's in there.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** Will it be labeled as vitamin D or will it have one of these quite confusing scientific names where you're not quite sure? Is that vitamin D? Is that not vitamin D?

**Shefalee Loth:** On the label, it should say vitamin D, but then if you look on the ingredients, it might not say vitamin D, it might say cold calciferol, which is.

**Shefalee Loth:** Vitamin D three basically,

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** thank goodness that we're talking about vitamin D and not cold calciferol on this podcast. 'cause that would be quite difficult for, uh, for us to say. Now we are gonna reveal some of our very best Vitamin D supplements on the market, including our Best Buy. In just a moment. And it is worth remembering that those results are exclusively available for which members.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** So if you wanna carry on listening and to listen to all of our other member exclusive podcasts and a whole host of more benefits, uh, you can sign up to be a witch member, you just go to which.co uk slash podcast offer. That's which.co uk slash podcast offer, and you can get 50% off an annual membership.

**Rob Lilley-Jones:** So would recommend doing that if you wanna find out what some of these best buys are and. Also get some of that other great stuff that I've just touched on. Uh, but for everyone else. Sha Sophie, thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you.

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