

Ask the Experts

THE VITAMIN D EFFECT... BY DR ADAM CAREY

Why do people suffer with lower vitamin D levels come the colder months?

Vitamin D is often called the sunshine vitamin. This is because we can actually make it when our skin is exposed to sunshine. Living in the northern hemisphere in the winter months, even on bright days, the sun is not strong enough to stimulate this formation. So, we have to rely on the stores we have built up over the summer and from the relatively small amounts most of us get from foods like eggs and oily fish. Going through the winter, our vitamin D levels gradually fall. Additionally, vitamin D is fat-soluble and so gets trapped in body fat. The fatter a person is, the more this becomes a problem. With rising levels of obesity we are seeing a staggering increase in vitamin D deficiencies; one in seven of those under 65 are deficient. This rises to one in three for those over 65 years, plus up to 75 per cent of the population have sub-optimal levels when tested. A recent study showed

that those who are deficient are 71 per cent more likely to die from all causes of disease when compared to those who have normal levels.

What effect does this have on various aspects of our health?

Vitamin D is responsible for looking after your bones, helping to absorb calcium and making them strong. However, it has been identified to work as a hormone and has an effect in most cells in the body. It is responsible for normal immune function, which is why colds are more common in the winter. It has a very wide variety of actions from improving your mood to reducing your risk of heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

How can people know if they are suffering with low levels, and what can they do about it?

Since vitamin D has a wide variety of actions the symptoms people can experience, as a



consequence of being deficient, are vary varied indeed. This can make it difficult to identify as the underlying cause of a problem. It is increasingly important to understand your own levels, to consider planning for a winter break or just taking a vitamin D supplement. A new service allows individuals to test their levels from a finger prick test at home. The test makes recommendations about the amount of a supplement you might require and when a future test would be sensible. It costs £24 and to access the test go to www.myvitdtest.com.

Q Do babies benefit from probiotics and are they safe to take during pregnancy and once the baby has been born?

Natalie Lamb explains: The composition of an infant's gut flora profoundly influences the development of a healthy gut lining and the corresponding immune system. Up to 70 per cent of immune cells are located within the gut. Probiotics have been shown to positively influence the infant's gut flora balance and developing immune system, showing promising results in the prevention and

treatment of infectious diarrhoea and allergy in infants, increased resistance to common coughs and colds and reduction in the need for antibiotic use. A review of *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* probiotics consumed by pregnant women during varying stages of pregnancy highlighted no reported adverse effects. Another review looked at studies giving probiotics directly to infants from the first day of birth; again no serious adverse events were reported. A healthy gut microflora is considered extremely important in pregnant women, for the health of her and her infant. A multi-strain



probiotic could be considered to provide a wider range of benefits to a broader range of women and their infants.

ABOUT THE EXPERTS



DR ADAM CAREY is a medical doctor and CEO of Corperformance, a wellness company that improves the wellness, personal performance and happiness of employees using an understanding of nutrition, exercise and psychology.



NATALIE LAMB is a qualified Nutritional Therapist who studied at the College of Naturopathic Medicine in London and is a fully registered member of The British Association of Nutritional Therapists. She works for the Bio-Kult and Lepicol brands.



KARL BICKLEY is Nutrition Consultant for USN UK. He has worked with elite athletes over the past 15 years encompassing cycling, rugby, football and basketball as well as spending six years working with drivers in Formula 1.



FIROUZEH AHARI is the owner of Princess Soraya Salon and Dexitil Vitasil, which distributes Silicium products. She has worked for over 30 years in health and beauty.

Ask the Experts

WEIGHT LOSS FOR SUMMER...

BY KARL BICKLEY

What are the common reasons for weight gain?

People gain weight for many reasons, with some individuals suffering due to health or genetic typing, however, in today's society convenience food, long and irregular working hours and lack of work life balance are contributing factors. This, combined with the café culture society we now find ourselves in, are often the main causes of weight gain. As a society, we work harder, for longer and take less time to think about our next meal, instead choosing grab and go items and convenient pastries or takeaway food. We are also less active and have moved away from fresh food sourced daily from greengrocers to processed food that our bodies can struggle to process and are often lacking in essential vitamins and minerals. It is well documented that we are getting fatter as a society and obesity is fast on the rise, but think back to the food choices previous generations made, which relied heavily on meals balanced between good protein sources and vegetables. Stress is also a contributing factor, and hormonal and anxiety-led food choices are often bad ones.

What are the best foods for weight loss, and why?

Balance and variety is key, but fresh fish, meat, fruit and vegetables are also massively important. Avoiding regular meals laden with complex starchy carbohydrates such as bread and pasta, and reducing the use of processed sauces and convenience foods, will help. Your food should be vibrant, fragrant, fresh and colourful, it should be attractive and appealing to the eye and you should always know where your next meal is coming from. As the day goes on your need for heavy meals should be replaced by lighter foods with less calorific impact. Choose low fat protein-based meals combined with vegetables and salad as a perfect evening meal choice.



How can sports nutrition products help with weight loss, and what would you recommend?

There is an array of sports nutrition products that can help with maintenance of a healthy bodyweight and a strong metabolism, as well as products that can help you reduce body fat levels. Meal replacements offer a great alternative to more convenient takeaway meal options and often contain added ingredients that help increase your body's metabolism and target a reduction in body fat. Alternatively, a mid-morning protein shake can help shape your meal choices for the rest of the day and reduce the effects of hunger hormones, such as ghrelin. This, in turn, reduces the likelihood of you making poor lunch choices. In addition, a regular source of protein also helps boost the amount of lean muscle you develop, leading to a more toned physique. It also stimulates your metabolic rate, your immune system and has general health and beauty benefits. In addition to this, utilising supplements such as CLA can also encourage a reduction in bodyweight and limit the effects of unavoidable meals rich in bad fats.



Q What is silicium and can it help with my ageing skin?

Firouzeh Ahari explains: Pregnant women transfer silicium to their child and babies use the silicium to build muscles, bones and grow. But silicium is lost daily through urine and perspiration, and unfortunately we are unable to absorb enough silicium from the food that we eat. As we lose valuable silicium, our skin becomes dehydrated and fine lines become visible. Dexsil Laboratories, in Belgium, produced the smallest form of silicium molecule that is absorbed by the human body, close to 100 per cent. As a result, the body naturally generates collagen. The skin all over the face and body becomes firm and hydrated. In young people, wrinkles will be delayed and in mature people, the depth of wrinkles will reduce and skin will become plump, firm and hydrated. The noticeable results occur within a few weeks of using the silicium range of products. Silicium works at a deeper level to promote collagen and elastin production and rebuild the connective tissue matrix that gives your skin a natural and healthy suppleness and freshness. Silicium has powerful anti-inflammatory properties, reducing both swelling of the skin tissues and dilation of the capillaries in response to an irritant substance. Silicium allows the body to naturally generate collagen, rebuild bone, vein, cartilage and strengthen gums, nails and hair. Silicium is incredibly effective for reducing inflammation, pain from arthritis, joint pain, post surgery and post accident inflammation.