

# Vitamin D intake now more important than ever



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Research reveals that 23 percent of Australians are vitamin D deficient and this increases to 36 percent at the end of winter.<sup>1</sup> It's suggested that this is due to several lifestyle factors, including prevalence of indoor jobs, increased office hours and increased time on screens inside.

With Australians currently spending more time indoors than ever before, adequate vitamin D is vital for maintaining a strong immune system and healthy body.

Nutritionist Dr Joanna McMillan says that given the current health climate, colder temperatures and change in daylight savings, it's now more important than ever to ensure vitamin D levels are not declining.

"We need adequate levels of vitamin D to have a balanced, healthy immune system," Dr McMillan says.

"Exposing your skin to the sun for a short while boosts vitamin D, however that is not always safe or possible and therefore food sources of vitamin D become very important."

There are several inexpensive, versatile foods that can help boost vitamin D intake, and most can be very easily incorporated into weekly meal planning. To boost intake, eggs are one of the highest natural sources of vitamin D; one serve provides 82 percent of the recommended daily intake for adults.<sup>2</sup>

"By having just two eggs a day, whether this be whipping up an omelette or eggs on toast, you could be keeping your body healthy. It's also great to include an oily fish meal 2-3 times a week such as salmon or mackerel, enjoy a small amount of liver pate on toast, or look for a vitamin D enriched milk," Dr McMillan says.

Vitamin D, nicknamed the 'sunshine vitamin', is essential to absorb calcium that is required for strong bones and healthy teeth. It is also involved in the regulation of certain hormones and the maintenance of a healthy nervous and immune system.

Low vitamin D is known to impact immune function, bone health and increase the risk of chronic disease or infection of the respiratory tract.

#### **Top five benefits of vitamin D**

1. Strong bones and teeth
2. Hormone regulation
3. Maintenance of a healthy nervous system
4. Boosting of immunity
5. Supporting a healthy pregnancy

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#### **References**

1. *Australian Health Survey: Biomedical Results for Nutrients, 2011-12*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics
2. *Australian Eggs, 2018*, <https://www.australianeggs.org.au/nutrition/nutritional-information-panel>