



Autumn is my favourite season of the year, however not everyone shares this sentiment! As the sunny days become more and more scarce some of us observe a correlating change in mood and often a different approach to health.

Despite the prevalence of sunshine throughout the year, Australians are still often vitamin D deficient. The increase in detection could be a combination of increased indoor work hours, our consistency with covering up with sunscreen, low fat diets, as well as a focus on regular testing due to recent discoveries of the association of vitamin D with several disease states.

It is very difficult to consume vitamin D in our diets, where it is found in relatively low levels in eggs, fatty fish, liver and some fortified foods such as milk. However vitamin D is different to other vitamins as its production requires exposure to sunlight, as well as adequate kidney function, as these organs convert vitamin D to its active form.

Trials have shown vitamin D is important for many other aspects of health. Deficiency signs and symptoms can also include; increased susceptibility to infection, reduced insulin secretion, and general muscle weakness. Vitamin D is of course well known for its role in calcium absorption thus a long term deficiency or malabsorption may lead to chronic health consequences such as osteoporosis or failure to thrive in children. For this reason, most calcium supplements contain vitamin D, however this is only in small amounts and is insufficient to reverse a deficiency. If you are diagnosed by your doctor with low serum Vitamin D you should supplement immediately.

On the bright side, vitamin D supplementation has shown evidence to be protective of cancer, bone fractures in osteoporosis, and even depression. So get out and sensibly enjoy the last of our blue skies and make sure you get regular vitamin D blood tests, especially if you have been deficient before, rarely see the light of day, or have been diagnosed with kidney damage.