

Media release
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Sunshine vitamin lowers risk of depression

A recent joint study from Italy and the United States says there is evidence of a link between insufficient vitamin D, the vitamin generated by sunshine on the skin and the risk of developing depression, particularly in the elderly.

With one in four New Zealanders reported to suffer from depression, the study's results have come at a pivotal time as the country braces for a long, cold winter.

Michelle Palmer, Executive Director Natural Products New Zealand says that taking vitamin D supplements to ensure our bodies receive enough of the 'sunshine vitamin' during winter is an important option that all New Zealanders should consider.

"During winter there are less opportunities for people to experience natural sunlight, so regularly taking the appropriate amount of a vitamin D supplement can really make a difference to how you feel.

"Vitamin D can mimic the effects of sunlight on the brain in lifting the mood. With many elderly people susceptible to not receiving enough sunlight throughout winter, a vitamin D supplement can make all the difference," she says.

Depression in the elderly is highly prevalent and can worsen the outcome of medical conditions the person suffers from, and can increase the risk of developing other medical conditions.

Dr Shaun Holt, medical advisor and researcher agrees that vitamin D supplements may be helpful in elevating people's moods.

"People often report feeling depressed or sad during winter and there is an increasing body of research showing that a lack of sun exposure may be an important factor resulting in low levels of vitamin D," says Dr Holt.

The recent study is not the first time that vitamin D has been linked to symptoms of depression. Dutch scientists explored the link in 2008 and the Research Center Oakland highlighted the role of the vitamin in maintaining brain health, noting the wide distribution of vitamin D receptors throughout the brain.

ENDS

Note: Natural Products New Zealand (NPNZ) represents over 80% of the Natural Products industry. Based on a survey of wholesale and retail sales information, export data and industry surveys, NPNZ's members make up the overwhelming majority of the natural products industry in terms of product lines, turnover, employment and exports.

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