

At-risk groups to receive free winter supply of vitamin D

- Deliveries will be made to clinically extremely vulnerable and care home residents
- Higher risk of vitamin D deficiency as these groups have spent more time indoors this year

More than 2.5 million vulnerable people across England will be offered free vitamin D supplements for the winter, the government has announced today (Saturday 28 November).

All care homes will automatically receive a provision for their residents, while individuals on the [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) list will receive a letter inviting them to opt in for a supply to be delivered directly to their homes. Deliveries will be free of charge, starting in January, and will provide 4 months' worth of supplements to last people through the winter months.

The supplements will support general health, in particular bone and muscle health. This is particularly important this year as these individuals are more likely to have been indoors for extended periods due to measures introduced to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Evidence of the link of vitamin D to COVID-19 is still being researched with larger scale trials needed. In the meantime, the Secretary of State has asked the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Public Health England (PHE) to re-review the existing evidence. The government will publish its findings towards the end of the year.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

Because of the incredible sacrifices made by the British people to control the virus, many of us have spent more time indoors this year and could be deficient in vitamin D.

The government is taking action to ensure vulnerable individuals can access a free supply to last them through the darker winter months. This will support their general health, keep their bones and muscles healthy and crucially reduce the pressure on our NHS.

A number of studies indicate vitamin D might have a positive impact in protecting against COVID-19. I have asked NICE and PHE to re-review the existing evidence on the link between COVID-19 and vitamin D to ensure we explore every potential opportunity to beat this virus.

Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist at Public Health England, said:

Vitamin D is important for our bone and muscle health.

We advise that everyone, particularly the elderly, those who don't get outside and those with dark skin, takes a vitamin D supplement containing 10 micrograms (400IU) every day.

This year, the advice is more important than ever with more people spending more time inside, which is why the government will be helping the clinically extremely vulnerable to get vitamin D.

The advice from PHE is for everybody to take 10 micrograms (400 IU) of vitamin D a day between October and early March to keep bones and muscles healthy.

PHE advises people who are more at risk of not having enough vitamin D to take a vitamin D supplement all year round. A range of products and doses are available at supermarkets, pharmacies and other retailers.

Anyone who is able to purchase a vitamin D supplement and start taking them now is advised to do so, even if you are also eligible for a delivery later in the year.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will provide further information and guidance for all nursing and residential care home providers in the coming weeks.