



Health

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More than 2.5m people in England to get free vitamin D

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More than 2.5 million people in England are to be offered a free supply of vitamin D by the government, officials have said.

Care homes in England will automatically receive supplies of the supplement for their residents in plans announced on Saturday. People on the clinically extremely vulnerable list will be sent a letter offering them the chance to opt in for a supply to their homes.

The free deliveries will start in January, providing four months' worth of vitamin D to up to 2.7 million people.

Public [Health](#) England (PHE) advises everyone to take 10 microgrammes of vitamin D a day between October and early March, particularly the elderly, people who do not go outside and those with dark skin.

Vitamin D is often referred to as the sunshine vitamin because, from about late March to the end of September, most people should be able to get all the vitamin D they need from sunlight. The body creates vitamin D from direct sunlight on the skin when outdoors, but between October and early March people do not get enough vitamin D from sunlight.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown measures keeping people inside more than normal, many people may have a higher risk of a vitamin D deficiency.

The health and social care secretary, 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.”

Anyone who can purchase vitamin D supplements is advised to start taking them now, even if they are eligible for a delivery next year.

Research is ongoing to investigate the link between vitamin D and Covid-19 protection, including a project at Queen Mary University of London investigating if correcting people’s vitamin D deficiencies over winter can reduce the risk and/or severity of Covid-19 and other acute respiratory infections.

Hancock has [asked PHE and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence](#) to look again at existing evidence on the link between vitamin D and Covid-19 “to ensure we explore every potential opportunity to beat this virus”.