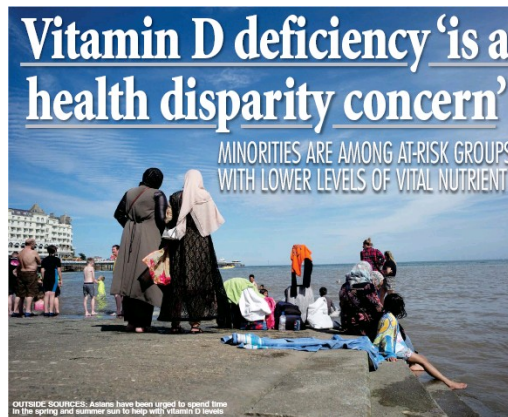


- Vitamins / Nutrition**Vitamin D deficiency 'is a health disparity concern'****MINORITIES ARE AMONG AT-RISK GROUPS WITH LOWER LEVELS OF VITAL NUTRIENT**

Eastern Eye (UK) · 8 Apr 2022 · 12

THE NHS has launched a review to promote the importance of vitamin D and identify ways to improve intake across the population, especially among south Asians who are among the most likely to be deficient in it.



Vitamin D deficiency is linked to rickets in children and bone pain and muscle weakness in adults. A call for evidence was launched last weekend by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID). It hopes to gather views from members of the public, public health experts, retailers, food manufacturers and other industry bodies on ways to improve uptake and tackle disparities.

“We must break the link between background and prospects for a healthy life, and I am determined to level up the health of the nation and tackle disparities,” the health secretary, Sajid Javid, said.

“People from black and Asian communities, older people and people who have limited access to the outdoors are more likely to have lower levels of vitamin D, which is essential for bone and muscle health and improving years of life lived in good health,” he added.

According to official estimates, around one in six adults and almost 20 per cent of children in the UK have vitamin D levels lower than government recommendations.

Older people, those who are housebound and people from black and south Asian communities are more likely to have lower levels of the vitamin, research has shown.

“I welcome this call for evidence as part of OHID’s continued drive to improve health outcomes and tackle health disparities,” said Dr Tazeem Bhatia, interim chief nutritionist at OHID. “We want to improve the dietary health of the population, and this includes supporting everyone to maintain sufficient vitamin D levels to support strong and healthy bones and muscles.”

The latest OHID review comes ahead of the health disparities white paper due to be published later this year. It will set out action to reduce disparities between different places and communities and address their causes,

so people's backgrounds do not dictate their prospects for a healthy life.

Sunlight during the spring and summer helps with vitamin D levels, as dietary sources are limited. The current health advice is for all adults and children to consider taking a daily 10mg supplement of vitamin D between October and March. Some at-risk groups are advised to think about taking a supplement throughout the year. However, uptake is low, with only one in six adults reporting taking a daily pill.

The call for evidence for the nationwide review will last for six weeks, and aims to consider how to improve the population's vitamin D levels, particularly among at-risk groups. The OHID said it will engage representatives from major retailers, pharmacy and health organisations, patient groups and bodies representing people from at-risk groups to support the national awareness campaign.