**[Sunrise With Sarah-Jane Mee](https://scout.tveyes.com/)**

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At this time of year, coughs and colds are everywhere and we're all doing our best to try and avoid them. But now health experts are saying that adding Vitamin D supplements to our food could help prevent the common cold. The vitamin - known as "the sunshine supplement" - is already proven to be beneficial for bone and muscle health - but it could now protect against respiratory infections too

But should we be adding supplements to our food? Well, we can speak now to Chair of the London Assembly Health Committee Dr Onkar Sahota and nutritionist at the Global Nutrition and Health Alliance Nigel Denby. You are both fit as fiddles and ready to have this discussion. Nigel, it seems that already when you go into the supermarkets, if you look at the cereal aisle or the bread aisle, you will see products that say, with extra vitamin this or that. Should this be more mainstream? This study is suggesting that we are looking for mandatory supplementation of food, and that is where I struggle. You're right, food all over the supermarket shelves already have added extras. But tomorrow, we could easily be sitting here talking about what food manufacturers need to take out of food. I think they have got enough to do to clean up their act without having to take the responsibility of

maintaining our nutritional intake. Supplements? Absolutely. We all need to be taking a vitamin D supplement at this time of year, there is no debate about that. It is whether we take it in a measured amount, using a good quality supplement, or whether we want to rely on food manufacturers and suits in Westminster determining how healthy our diet is. Dr Sahota, where do you stand on this? They have discovered this link between vitamin D and fending off the common cold and flu, which can be a nightmare at this time of year for children and old people, costing the NHS millions every year. Do you think this should be put into our food? Looking in the paper, it does not say there is a definite link between respiratory illnesses and vitamin D. It is

creating a hypothesis for more research. Having said this, vitamin D deficiency is prevalent in this country and its associated not only with bone diseases but also prevention of heart diseases and cancers and respiratory illnesses. So we need to do more research. We know that rickets is going up in this country, particularly in young children. In America, they have vitamin D added to their fruits and the risk of rickets is less in America. So there was a case to be made for certain groups. But I do agree that the evidence is not clear-cut in known disease areas. It sounds like people are begging poor diet choices. We all know you can get it from things like oily fish and sometime. These people have poor diets, so you then look at injecting vitamin D into cakes or orange squash. Where do you draw the line? I agree. If we had a well balanced,

healthy diet, we shouldn't need any supplements. It is because we don't have a well-balanced diet, so you need to educate people about a balanced diet. But there are certain groups who do not get enough sunshine exposure in this country. Let's not forget, we already fortify spreads with vitamin D. That is a mandatory situation in the UK. What do you mean? Alternative to butter. Any sort of spread legally has to contain vitamin D already. You're right, you can get some vitamin D from oily fish and eggs, but you're not going to meet your requirements without more sunshine. What is the requirement? We don't know what our daily dose should be. You're quite right. When vitamin D was discovered, we didn't know enough

about it. We didn't set a requirement for it. We believed we lived in a climate that would give us enough from sunshine. I do know how expensive a trip to a health food shop can be. The Doctor's point is a good one, that supplements can be incredibly cost prohibitive if you mandate food manufacturers to put it in foodstuffs, then at least the cost is affordable. But children's vitamin drops containing vitamin D are available free of charge through the healthy start programme to all families that receive benefits, and the uptake of them is woefully poor because it is a complete shambles. You go from one area to another, and parents have no idea how they get a voucher to then reclaimed their supplements. If we streamlined this and the Government went into partnership with pharmacies or the supermarket, it would be so easy and then we could expand that to include older people

and other at risk groups. So we have got to raise the profile of vitamin D, but just to throw the responsibility at food manufacturers, who, let's face it, we can't trust already because of some of the rubbish they put in their food, is passing the buck. Doctor, apart from vitamin D, do supplements were? I am a big supplement taker. I spend a lot of money on the high street was that I don't know if there are any good, but it is preying on my insecurities and when I take my supplements, I feel secure. You are right. If you are deficient in something, though supplements to help. But say if you are already getting enough, adding supplements will not benefit you. If you have a healthy, balanced diet, taking supplements is a waste of time. That is why they are not prescribed on the NHS. They have no value for you. The secret is to get

a well-balanced diet. Make sure you are not deficient in anything. Of course, the manufacturers of vitamins to rely on the fact that we suspect we may be deficient in something. But the secret is a healthy diet. Then you need nothing. I have never taken supplements in my life. Let me add to that. I have been banging on about healthy balanced diet is since I can't remember, but you are right. But with vitamin D, you will not get enough from food. So if you aren't getting enough sunshine and you're not confident that you're going to be using enough spreads or whatever, I personally would take a vitamin D supplement and I would recommend all of us to do that. People talk about the Mediterranean diet. It is not the diet, it is just the fact that

they get more sun. It would be nice to do more sunbathing. I will be buying from a local health store today. Thank you very much, Nigel and Dr Sahota. Let's see what Adam has in store on today's All Out Politics. Adam? Not much sunshine in this studio. That is why I take vitamin D.