



Good day Sunshine

Around one in five of us are lacking in vitamin D, the 'sunshine' nutrient linked to health and vitality. But how can we get our fix?

Catherine Turner heads to Ibiza to find out



Bright blue skies and dazzling light had us grabbing our sunglasses the minute we stepped off the plane at Ibiza airport. The power of

the sunshine was potent since summer had been fizzling out to a grey fug as we left London early that morning, and there was a collective smile and relaxing of shoulders. I was visiting the Balearic isle for a conference hosted by More Drinks (a vitamin drinks brand), to discuss vitamin D and how it affects our health. It's a subject close to my heart, as a recent blood test revealed I'm one of the estimated 10 million in the UK with low levels of the nutrient.

It's becoming a modern-day malaise, particularly for us sun-starved Brits. Around 90% of the vitamin D we need is produced in the skin when it's exposed to sunlight and is stored in the body's fat cells (which is why it's known as a fat-soluble vitamin). However, we can't rely on our summers to build up our supplies for winter – the UK averages just 1,493 hours of sun a year compared with 2,860 in Ibiza. Our indoor lifestyles

don't help either, as many of us drive to work, have a desk lunch, drive home to eat dinner and then perhaps do a yoga class or session at the gym. And, the more melanin in our skin, the slower the production of vitamin D, so people with darker skin are even more vulnerable – studies suggest that up to 90% of the multi-ethnic population in the UK suffer from a vitamin D deficiency.

Another dilemma is that many of us focus on protecting our skin when we do go in the sun – a natural reaction to the rise in skin cancers. I'm a textbook example. Decades of slathering myself in high-factor sunscreens have kept my skin looking youthful, yet SPF's are designed to filter out UVB rays, which actually trigger vitamin D in our bodies. Plus, as we age, our skin gets less efficient at producing it.

On the short drive from the airport to our villa, Can Pere Jaume (canperejaume.com), near the pretty village of San Juan in the south of the island, I realised that though I've never been a beach babe, I began to crave the sun when I hit my forties. Surely it was no coincidence.

The light is fading and the heady