



Media Release

Date: **EMBARGOED TO 00:01 AM** Sunday 12 May 2013

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Leading health groups call on Victorians to bone up on vitamin D knowledge

SunSmart, Osteoporosis Australia and Arthritis and Osteoporosis Victoria are joining together to raise awareness around the importance of vitamin D for healthy bones and in the prevention of osteoporosis.

SunSmart Manager, Jen Makin, said: "Vitamin D is crucial for bone and muscle development and in the prevention of osteoporosis, yet the Victorian Health Monitor Report revealed that over 50% of Victorians are low in vitamin D during winter."

"Prevalence of vitamin D deficiency is two and a half times higher in winter (53%) as compared to summer (20%), highlighting the impact of seasonal variability in ultraviolet (UV) radiation on vitamin D levels. As the colder weather approaches, now is the time when Victorians need to start paying attention to their sun exposure and getting the balance right."

New research shows that in winter, the majority of Victorians (61%) surveyed hadn't exposed their arms or legs to the sun in the past month.

"This is worrying as we know that our bodies only store enough vitamin D to last between 30 to 60 days and we also know that over one third of Victorians (37%) don't realise that they are in danger of not getting enough vitamin D if they regularly cover up their skin with clothing."

"We are encouraging Victorians to get outside in the midday sun over winter and roll up their sleeves and expose their arms or legs to the sun. From May to August, it's important that Victorians with fair to olive skin get approximately two to three hours of midday winter sun exposure to the face, hands and arms (or equivalent area of skin) spread over the week. That's about 20 minutes a day. Sun protection is not required unless near highly reflective surfaces such as snow, outdoors for extended periods or the UV index reaches three and above."

Professor Peter Ebeling, Medical Director of Osteoporosis Australia and Head of Endocrinology, University of Melbourne at Western Hospital, said: "Australians from population groups at risk of low vitamin D, including people with naturally very dark skin and those with little or no sun exposure, should discuss any concerns with their GP. Levels can be checked via a simple blood test and treated with supplements where required," Professor Ebeling said.

For more information on UV, skin cancer and vitamin D, visit sunsmart.com.au. For more information on vitamin D and sunshine for bone health see the Vitamin D Fact Sheet at osteoporosis.org.au. For information on arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions, visit arthritisvic.org.au.





About the Research

The Victorian Health Monitor was conducted by the Victorian Government Department of Health as a Victorian state-wide cross-sectional, population-health measurement survey, with data collected between May 2009 and April 2010.

