



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **TASMANIANS AT HIGH RISK OF VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY Time to take hats off, says Cancer Council Tasmania**

TASMANIANS are at high risk of vitamin D deficiency and Cancer Council Tasmania is reminding people that now is the time to soak up some sun to ensure sufficient levels of this essential vitamin are maintained.

A study undertaken by Menzies Research Institute involving 730 people showed that 67 per cent of Tasmanian women and 34 per cent of Tasmanian men suffered from vitamin D insufficiency.

“Vitamin D is essential for good health as it keeps bones and muscles strong and healthy. However the UVB rays from the sun that enable us to make vitamin D in the skin are also responsible for skin cancers and so finding a healthy balance is paramount,” CCT Director of Cancer Control Celia Taylor said.

“Research has proven that when the UV Index is less than three, sun protection is no longer necessary, however those outside for extended periods, working on concrete walls or floors on building sites, at high altitudes or near reflective surfaces such as water or snow should continue to follow SunSmart guidelines.”

“Solaria are not a safe way to top up vitamin D because the UV rays are up to five times stronger than the midday Summer sun.”

Tasmania’s average UV Index is less than three between May 1 and August 31 and during this time most Tasmanians need 30 minutes of unprotected sun exposure each day at noon, or 45 minutes at either 10am or 2pm.

Ms Taylor said those who covered their skin for religious or cultural reasons, were housebound, in institutional care, or 9-5 office workers were considered to be at risk of severe vitamin D deficiency.

“Children with vitamin D deficiency can suffer muscle and bone weakness and bone deformities. Adults with low vitamin D levels are at risk of bone and joint pain, muscle and bone weakness, fractures and falls,” she said.



Certain people are at a high risk of skin cancer including those who have already had skin cancer, received an organ transplant, or are highly sun sensitive and should discuss their vitamin D needs with their medical practitioner.

Vitamin D production decreases during winter when the intensity of ultraviolet radiation is lower. The body can rely on tissue stores of vitamin D for up to 60 days, assuming levels were adequate prior to winter. While less people are vitamin D deficient in summer, it is still advisable to prevent deficiency during winter months as fracture rates increase with deficiency, particularly in older adults.

CCT is a not-for-profit organisation that works to minimise the impact of cancer on all Tasmanians through advocacy, raising awareness of cancer prevention and offering advice and support for those living with cancer and their carers.

**For more information contact Nic Dermoudy, Cancer Council Tasmania, on 0438 604 029**

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