

## UK CONSUMERS INVEST IN NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS AS FOOD SUPPLEMENT SALES SOAR AHEAD OF SECOND LOCKDOWN

The Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA), the organisation that represents the UK's natural health industry, is reporting a significant rise in sales across the health food and food supplements sector since the lockdown began in March. Sales surged 22%<sup>i</sup> in the past month, compared with the same period last year.

Commenting on this, Graham Keen, Executive Director at HFMA, said, *“Consumers are responding to the wealth of evidence that immune health can be optimised through supplementation. There are ten micronutrients that carry authorisation for an approved ‘immune health’ claim. This comes at a time when many health policy makers and key influencers are seeking ways to help manage health and wellness within the UK population.”*

Meeting recently with the Public Health Minister, the HFMA urged a more proactive approach towards addressing the nutritional needs of the population. Discussions centred on the valuable role of vitamin D, which already carries a Government recommendation for 10 micrograms daily for ‘everyone’<sup>ii</sup>. Recent studies suggest that low blood levels of vitamin D are associated with a potential increased risk of COVID-19 infection<sup>iii</sup>. The incidence of deficiency is one of the highest in Europe, with a third of the population estimated to develop deficiency over the winter months<sup>iv</sup>. However, this isn't the only nutrient that's important in optimal immune health.

The HFMA's Scientific Adviser, Dr Michele Sadler, said *“We know that a number of micronutrients are important for normal function of the immune system, such as vitamins D, C, A, B6, B12 and folic acid, plus the minerals selenium, zinc, copper and iron<sup>v</sup>. Maintaining an optimal intake of these nutrients is important for a healthy immune system. Some academics have called for those with low vitamin D status to supplement with higher intakes of vitamin D, as this vitamin has a wide margin of safety, and supplemental intakes up to 75mcg each day are within safe limits.”*

Expert adviser to the HFMA, Ben Brown, said *“This is a time for a shift in emphasis from simple correction of deficiency, onto more purposeful supplementation for immune support. The importance of this can't be over-stated. Dedicated, regular and sustained supplementation is a most effective strategy for health and wellbeing during these times.”*

Graham Keen continues, *“It's an important time for nutritional science and for the advancement of research. Backed up by a targeted national health policy, access to quality nutritional formulations and good advice from retailers, consumers have much to gain from access to nutrients that are proven to support the immune system.”*

**Available for interview**

- Graham Keen, Executive Director, Health Food Manufacturers' Association
- Esther Mills-Roberts, Communications Manager, Health Food Manufacturers' Association
- Dr Michele Sadler: Scientific Adviser, Health Food Manufacturers' Association

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**The HFMA**

The Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA) is the voice of the UK's natural health industry and represents around 130 manufacturers and suppliers of natural health products. Founded in 1965, the HFMA is a not-for-profit organisation which operates long-standing codes of practice to ensure that member companies adhere to high standards and offer good quality, safe products supported by responsible, lawful information. For further information about the HFMA, visit [www.hfma.co.uk](http://www.hfma.co.uk).

The HFMA recently launched the [HealthyDoesIt](#) campaign to empower individuals to live healthier lives within their local community.

**References:**

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<sup>i</sup> COVID-19 Impact on CPG & Retail IRI Market Flash Report. Data to w/e 10<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

<sup>ii</sup> National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2020) *COVID-19 rapid evidence summary: vitamin D for COVID-19*. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/advice/es28/chapter/Advisory-statement-on-likely-place-in-therapy> [Accessed 05 November 2020]

<sup>iii</sup> Vitamin D sufficiency, a serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D at least 30 ng/mL reduced risk for adverse clinical outcomes in patients with COVID-19 infection. Available at: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0239799>

<sup>iv</sup> Lips, P., Cashman, K D., Lamberg-Allardt, C., Bischoff-Ferrari, H A. *et al.* 2019. Current vitamin D status in European and Middle East countries and strategies to prevent vitamin D deficiency: a position statement of the European Calcified Tissue Society. *European Journal of Endocrinology*. V 180, I 4, pp-23-54  
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<sup>v</sup> Berger, M M., Bischoff-Ferrari., Zimmermann, M., Herter. *et al.* 2020. Nutritional status in supporting a well-functioning immune system for optimal health with a recommended for Switzerland. *Societe Suisse de Nutrition*.