

# Naturally enriched mushrooms may increase vitamin D

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With about 40% of the Irish population thought to have low levels of Vitamin D, University College Dublin (UCD) scientists are investigating if consuming mushrooms naturally enriched with vitamin D could help boost our levels of the crucial 'sunshine' vitamin.

"Our skin naturally produces [vitamin D](#) through exposure to the sun, so with lower levels of sunlight in the Northern Hemisphere between October and April it is no surprise that many Irish people have sub-optimal levels of the vitamin in their blood stream," explains Dr Anne Nugent, UCD Institute of Food and Health, University College Dublin.

Every year about 8.5 million kg of mushrooms are consumed in Ireland.

"So we are working with volunteers to examine if consuming vitamin D enriched mushrooms could improve the levels of the vitamin in adults," says Dr Nugent.

"If our findings are positive, consumers will have another dietary choice for increasing their vitamin D levels."

Vitamin D plays an essential role in cell growth, immune function and strengthening bones. Some scientific studies have linked low levels of the circulating form of Vitamin D in the blood stream to osteoporosis, cancer and obesity.

"In this study we are replicating nature's way of enhancing mushrooms with Vitamin D," says Dr. John Collier, Group Research and Development Manager, Monaghan Mushrooms Ltd, the company funding the dietary study.

Mushrooms are a versatile food, low in energy and fat but containing considerable amounts of protein, dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals.

The UCD study is funded by Monaghan Mushrooms Ltd in collaboration with the American Mushroom Council and the Australian Mushroom Growers Association through the Mushroom Global Health Initiative.

The Mushrooms and Health Global Initiative is a collaborative effort to collect, evaluate, and disseminate, validated nutrition and health research information on mushrooms.

The UCD Institute of Food and Health research team includes: Dr. Anne Nugent, Dr. Lorraine Brennan, and Professor Mike Gibney from the UCD School of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine.

Monaghan Mushrooms are the largest vertically integrated mushroom

company in Europe and the largest grower and compost manufacturer in the UK, Ireland and Canada. They are also the largest supplier of mushrooms to the UK market. In 2010, the company produced upwards of 50 million kgs of [mushrooms](#).

Provided by University College Dublin

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