

supplements. Past experience has shown that the consequences can be fatal.

“Vitamin A supplements have been believed to reduce the risk of lung cancer, but it turned out that a high intake also increases the risk of lung cancer in smokers.”

Robsahm’s dietary recommendation for cancer patients is to follow official guidelines, until more is known about the link between vitamin D and cancer.

Dark winters affect the progress of cancer

In a previous study, Robsahm and colleagues found that patients with breast, colon and prostate cancer are 15-25 percent less likely to die if they are diagnosed during summer or autumn, compared with patients diagnosed during the winter.

Sunshine is our main source of vitamin D, and the winter months in Norway are notoriously dark.

“There is no vitamin D production in the skin during the winter,” says Robsahm. “From October to March, the sunlight does not contain the necessary UV-B rays.”

Vitamin D – the super vitamin?

A long series of studies have focused on vitamin D and how it affects our health, and many of them are from the past few years.

Some of the studies appear to have conflicting results, such as those linking vitamin D to a high life expectancy and premature death, but scientists have also convincingly argued that the vitamin has positive effects on bone health and a good potential for treating diseases such as multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer’s.

“Vitamin D is definitely an exciting vitamin,” says Robsahm. “It’s involved in many cell processes, it controls several genes, and almost every tissue in the body has vitamin D receptors, indicating its important role.”

 [Sunshine is our main source of vitamin D. \(Photo: Colourbox\)](#) [7]

 [Trude Eid Robsahm, a co-author of the study. \(Photo: The Cancer Registry of Norway\)](#) [8]

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[Steinar Tretli et al., Serum levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D and survival in Norwegian patients with cancer of breast, colon, lung, and lymphoma: a population-based study, Cancer Causes Control, 2012](#) [14]

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August 15, 2012 - 07:00

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