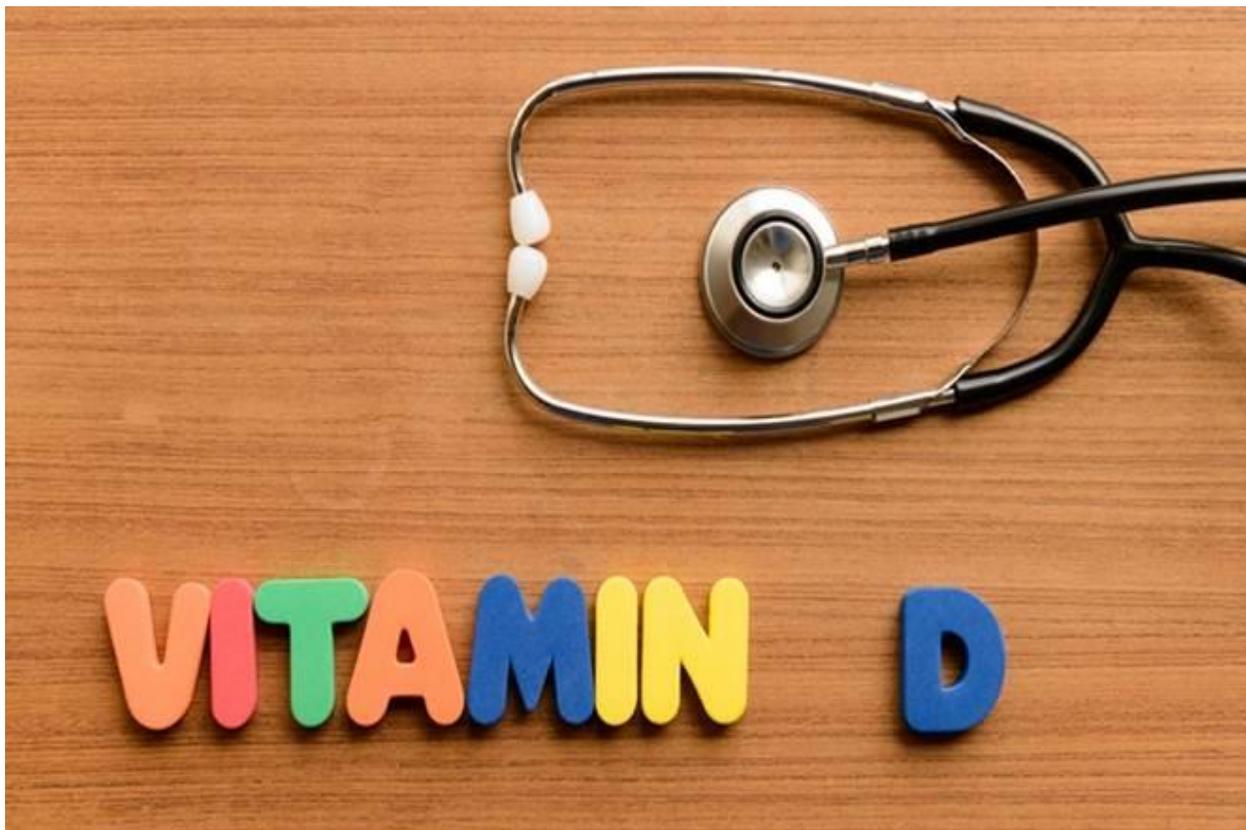


 THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

FSSAI for assembly in schools around noon-time to address Vitamin D deficiency

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FSSAI IN NEWS

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Food safety regulator FSSAI today launched an unique initiative 'Project Dhoop' to encourage schools to shift their morning assembly to around noon-time, mainly between 11 am to 1 pm, to ensure maximum absorption of Vitamin D in students through natural sunlight. The move comes in the backdrop of rising incidence of Vitamin D deficiency in the country as the studies have found that over 90 per cent of boys and girls in various Indian cities are deficient in Vitamin D despite most part of India receiving abundant sunshine all the year through, it said.

The 'Project Dhoop' has been launched by the Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) along with National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) as well as North MCD Schools. "Project Dhoop's Noon Assembly is an innovative and effective concept to ensure that school students get adequate Vitamin D through sunlight, while also opting to choose food products like milk and edible oils that are fortified with Vitamins A and D," FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal said at the launch of the initiative on the occasion of World Health Day.

Opting for fortified foods is a simple and inexpensive way to address micro-nutrient deficiencies without any radical change in behaviour or eating patterns. Both fortified milk and fortified edible oil are now readily available across the country, he said in a statement. Participating on the occasion, representatives of NCERT, NDMC and North MCD Schools and school authorities said, "We would definitely look at this opportunity seriously, considering that the noon assembly takes advantage of the freely available sunshine.

"We shall advise all schools to shift morning assembly to noon assembly. This little step can help children grow into healthy adults," the statement added. FSSAI Chairman Ashish Bahuguna hoped that the 'Project Dhoop' would spread awareness about Vitamin D and encourage exposure to sunlight by people across the country. Many factors can contribute to Vitamin D deficiency such as overuse of sun screen, wearing clothes that cover most of the skin, working inside all day in air-conditioned atmosphere among others.