

# Vitamin D could be good for the heart in older adults, a large study finds

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Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the US, responsible for roughly 1 in 5 deaths every year. But researchers think there may be a promising and simple way to slightly reduce your risk of heart problems: Taking vitamin D supplements.

In a large Australian study that spanned six years and involved over 21,000 people, researchers found that older adults who took vitamin D supplements had a mildly lower risk of cardiovascular events, particularly heart attacks.

The study looked at participants between the ages of 60 and 84, and took lifestyle factors, such as diet, as well as current cardiovascular medication, into account. They were randomly selected to either take one monthly vitamin D3 supplement (60,000 IU) or a placebo.

## Heart attack risks went down by a fifth

The study's researchers believed vitamin D could improve heart health by reducing inflammation, regulating blood pressure, and preventing vascular smooth muscle dysfunction.

The biggest findings were that the rate of major cardiovascular events was 9% lower in the group that took the supplements, with the rate of heart attacks 19% lower in that group. There was no difference in the rate of stroke between the two groups.

The findings are promising, but take them with a grain of salt

Professor Rachel Neale, one of the lead researchers of the study, told Insider that, "while the findings are suggestive of benefit, they're not conclusive."

First, the supplements were slightly more effective in people already taking statins. Studying people who *aren't* taking cardiovascular drugs may help to show the true effect of vitamin D3 supplements.

Also, the study used monthly supplements, because people are more likely to stick to a monthly pill than a daily one. But Neale said "there have now been some publications suggesting that daily dosing has more effect than monthly dosing."

The study also used older participants, so it's unclear how vitamin D3 would help people under the age of 60.

In the end, the researchers concluded that "vitamin D supplementation might reduce the incidence of major cardiovascular events," but stressed that more research is warranted.

At the same time, Neale believes it's unlikely a study of this size will be repeated any time soon. "To be honest, I don't think we're going to get more conclusive evidence because nobody else is going to do the same type of trial," she said. "It's very expensive."

## Vitamin D supplements aren't cure-alls

Neale said there are no "simple takeaways" from this study. While she doesn't think taking vitamin D supplements will harm anyone, she "would argue that we've got better evidence for healthy food than we have for vitamin D supplementation when it comes to reducing heart attacks."

Vitamin D is linked to many other health benefits as well, such as improving bone health, strengthening the immune system, and possibly reducing the risk of cancer or depression — though more research is still needed in these areas.

# The importance of Vitamin D and what happens if you don't have enough

Jasmime Kaur

It's shocking just how many people are deficient in vitamin D. In an interview with Newsweek health experts spoke about what happens to our well being and our health when we don't have enough of it.

Vitamin D is also referred to as the "sunshine vitamin," according to licenced dietician and CEO of the supplement firm GutPersonal Bridgitte Mallinson. It supports bone and brain health, among other bodily functions. It's especially important for postmenopausal women or those who are more susceptible to osteoporosis because it has been shown to reduce hormone imbalances, digestive problems, and both. According to the Center for Disease Control, vitamin D is essential for nerve function as well as bone and muscle health. It is also good for boosting your immune system and fighting bacteria and viruses. People who are low on Vitamin D have issues like fatigue, depression, autoimmunity issues and inflammation. It is also sometimes causes seasonal depression, dementia and Alzheimer's. Mallinson explains that a severe lack of vitamin D may result in reduced bone density, as this essential nutrient aids in the absorption of calcium, which is necessary for strong bones.

In addition, vitamin K is responsible for proper calcium distribution within the body, while magnesium is involved in the regulation and activation of both vitamin D and calcium. Therefore, if an individual is deficient in vitamin D and their bone density is low, they are at an increased risk of developing osteoporosis and suffering from bone fractures.

## 15 Minutes Vitamin D Boost

In an interview with **Dr Dung Trinh**, chief medical officer at the Healthy Brain Clinic in Long Beach, California said, treatment for vitamin D deficiency is increasing sun exposure and a check on dietary intake.

*"A doctor may also prescribe supplements, depending on the severity of the deficiency. Some foods high in vitamin D include fatty fish, such as salmon and tuna, beef liver, cheese and eggs. Many breakfast cereals and dairy products are also fortified with vitamin D."*

## How much Vitamin D?

The National Institute of Health says that this depends on your age.

The average daily recommended amounts are listed below in micrograms (mcg) and International Units (IU):

- Birth to 12 months – 10 mcg (400 IU)
- Children aged one to 13 – 15 mcg (520 – 600 IU)
- Teens 14 – 18 years 15 mcg (600 IU)
- Adults 19 – 70 years 15 mcg (600 IU)
- Adults 71 and older – 20 mcg (800 IU)
- Pregnant and breastfeeding women 15 mcg (600 IU)

## Magnesium's role

A 2018 study in the the Journal of the American Osteopathic Association revealed 50 percent of Americans have a magnesium deficiency, which makes the vitamin reserves "stored and inactive."

Magnesium is essential for the absorption, utilization, and conversion of vitamin D in the body. A magnesium deficiency can lead to difficulty in absorbing enough vitamin D, affecting the bioavailability of this crucial nutrient. Nearly 50% of Americans are deficient in magnesium, which contributes to the rising prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in the country.

Even if you live in a sunny area, like California or Arizona, you may still suffer from a vitamin D deficiency if your body lacks enough magnesium to absorb it properly. Magnesium acts as the fuel for the vitamin D "car," making it go, according to experts like Mallinson.

How to up your magnesium

Magnesium can be found in green leafy vegetables such as spinach, legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains are good sources of magnesium. Along with cereals and other fortified foods.