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02/16/2017 06:47:09 PM

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Their benefits have long been debated but new research has found that vitamin D supplements can in fact help stave off colds and flu. Experts say more than three million people across the UK could avoid infections by taking tablets of the so-called "sunshine vitamin", particularly during winter. We found that for the population as a whole, taking vitamin D reduces the risk of an acute respiratory infection, cold, flu, sore throat, by 10%. But if you are in one of the group who have low baseline levels, vitamin D deficiency, risk reduction is 50%, halving your risk such an infection. I'm joined by GP, Dr Ranj Singh.

So, do you buy into this study? Should we be taking more vitamin D? We know that vitamin D is important for bone health. Deficiency causes Ricketts in adults. There has been interest in its role in other conditions, from MS to asthma and cancer, even your immune system and your ability to fight off colds. This piece of research is nothing new, actually. It has taken existing studies, amalgamated them and looked at the data of something like 11,000 people from lots of different places over lots of different times, and looked at the risk of respiratory tract infections, like colds, and whether vitamin D reduces your chances of getting them. The results sound promising and everyone thinks, great. Not true, actually. You have to be very careful. When you lump together studies like this, you introduce inaccuracies. The studies have not been done in the same way,

not done on the same groups of people, not in the same conditions. Whilst there is a suggestion that vitamin D may help, there is not enough here to tell everyone to start supplementing, or fortifying, which is what the authors suggest, that fortifying food might be a good idea. That is what Public Health England have said. It is safe to say we have not had much Sun recently. The rain has been around and it has been cold. What are healthy levels of vitamin D? The current recommendations are that everyone during the autumn and winter months should think about taking a low-level vitamin D supplement, ten micrograms, everyone above the age of one. But other groups should think about taking it all year, including pregnant women, children under five, unless they are having more than a pint of formula milk, anyone at risk of vitamin D deficiency, or if you've are from a cultural group where you might have darker skin, or cover up more and

not get much sunlight. That is because firstly, our diets are not good enough. We are not getting enough from what we eat, most of us. Secondly, there is not the right kind of sunlight in this country to get it. So a low-level supplementation probably won't do you any harm and will possibly do you some benefit, but I don't think we all need to start rushing out of the shops and buying it. And if people are worried they should visit their GP. Yes, to get your levels checked commie can do that at your GP.