Vitamin D can protect against colds, flu: study claims

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HEALTH & SCIENCE

Vitamin D can protect against colds, flu: study claims

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AFP News Agency   
Vitamin D supplements for people who avoid the sun entirely & use too much sunblock & thus have low vitamin D levels, likely to benefit greatly from vitamin's protective effects.

Taking extra vitamin D can **protect** against colds, **flu** and other **respiratory** **infections**.

This is **according to** a **study** released Thursday which has reopened a **debate** on the usefulness of **over-the-counter** vitamin D **supplements**.

Vitamin D is found in some foods without any need to be added and can even be synthesised by the body when the **skin** is **exposed** to **ultraviolet** light.

**WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND?**  
  
A **review** of 25 **clinical trials** in 14 countries, some with **conflicting** **results**, **yielded**"the first **definitive** evidence" of a **link** between vitamin D and **flu** **prevention**, **researchers** **claimed** in The BMJ medical **journal**.   
  
The **effects** were strongest for people with very low levels of the **nutrient**.

Many people do not have enough vitamin D, **especially** in places with grey cloudy **climates** [and also in places like Thailand where many people **shun** the sun out of a fear of sunburn and getting dark **skin** or because the bright **rays** of the sun are just too hot and tiring].

**CONTRADICTORY CONCLUSIONS ON THE EFFICACY OF VITAMIN D OVER THE YEARS**

Scientific studies over the years have delivered **contradictory** conclusions on the **topic**.  
  
Some have shown that low levels of vitamin D increase the **risk** of bone fractures, heart disease, colorectal **cancer**, **diabetes**, **depression**, Alzheimer's disease and **death**.   
  
Others said there is no **evidence** of a **link** to disease **risk**.

**DAILY & WEEKLY SUPPLEMENTS FOR THOSE WITH LOWEST VITAMIN D LEVELS**

For the new **study**, **researchers** from the Queen Mary University of London conducted the biggest-ever **survey** of **trials** **involving** nearly 11,000 people.   
  
And they found **clues** as to why **supplements** seem to work in some **trials** but not in others.   
  
"The **bottom line** is that *the protective****effects****of vitamin D supplementation are strongest in those who have the lowest vitamin D levels*, and when supplementation is*given daily or weekly* rather than in more widely-spaced **doses**," lead researcher Adrian Martineau said in a statement.

**PROTECTION AGAINST RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS**  
  
Vitamin D is thought to **protect** against **respiratory** **infections**, including bronchitis and pneumonia, by boosting levels of antibiotic-like peptides in the lungs, said the team.   
  
This fits with an observation that colds and **flu** are more common in winter and spring, when vitamin D levels are lowest.

**SEEMS TO PROTECT AGAINST ASTHMA ATTACKS TOO**  
  
It may also explain why vitamin D seems to **protect** against **asthma** attacks, they said.   
  
In an **editorial** **published** with the **study**, experts Mark Bolland and Alison Avenell said it should be viewed as a **hypothesis** in need of scientific **confirmation**.   
  
Louis Levy, head of nutrition science at Public Health England, shared their caution.   
  
"This **study** does not **provide** **sufficient** **evidence** to **support** **recommending** vitamin D for reducing the **risk** of **respiratory tract** **infections**," he said **via** the Science Media Centre in London.

**CASE FOR UNIVERSAL VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTS & FOOD FORTIFICATION**  
  
Other **observers** were more **optimistic**.   
  
The case for universal vitamin D **supplements**, or **food fortification**, "is now **undeniable**," concluded Benjamin Jacobs of the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food\_fortification

https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD-HealthProfessional/