**Taking vitamin D tablets daily or weekly is as effective as a flu vaccine**

Ian Horswill, News Corp Australia Network

February 16, 2017 7:24am

TAKING vitamin D tablets daily or weekly can protect against colds and flu, research shows.

Those who take the “sunshine vitamin” regularly cut their chances of respiratory infection by 12 per cent — the protection level offered by a flu vaccine, [The Sun reported](https://www.thesun.co.uk/living/2875167/daily-vitamin-d-supplements-can-prevent-flu-just-as-well-as-vaccine-for-just-2p-a-pill-study-shows/).

Vitamin D is also vital for healthy bones and plays a role in the immune system, [the BBC reported](http://www.bbc.com/news/health-38988982).

The supplements have been criticised by some experts as being pointless but last year, Public Health England said that people were generally not getting the recommended 10 micrograms of vitamin D a day from sunlight in winter.

Even in Australia, some general practitioners are concerned that patients are vitamin D deficient with “sun safe” messages about cancer have caused them to cover up and are not getting any sunshine on their skin

The latest new study, [published in The British Medical Journal](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.i6583), suggests that taking vitamin D may have benefits beyond bone and muscle health and protects against acute respiratory infections.

Results of the study fit with the observation that colds and flu are most common during winter and spring, when levels of vitamin D are at their lowest. Respiratory tract infections are any infection of the sinuses, throat, airways or lungs and can last up to 30 days.

The common cold is the most widespread respiratory tract infection; others include ear infections, bronchitis and pneumonia.

The new research, led by academics from [Queen Mary University of London](http://www.qmul.ac.uk/), analysed data from almost 11,000 participants aged up to 95 who took part in 25 clinical trials conducted in 14 countries.

The study concluded that supplements can help prevent acute respiratory tract infections, particularly among those who are deficient in vitamin D. After adjusting for other potentially influential factors, the researchers found that vitamin D supplementation cut the proportion of participants experiencing at least one acute respiratory tract infection by 12 per cent.

Lead researcher Professor Adrian Martineau said: “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”.