Vitamin D supplements could prevent colds and flu, according to a new study

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[Ellen Scott for Metro.co.uk](http://metro.co.uk/author/ellen-scott/)Thursday 16 Feb 2017 8:34 am

We all know we’re supposed to be getting more vitamin D.

We’re reminded every time we see our pasty, sun-deprived skin. Each time we talk to our nan about eating plenty of oily fish. Every time we’re tired, and think to ourselves: ‘yup. Probably just low in vitamin D’.

We know it’s important. But sometimes, just the promise of ‘good health’ isn’t enough to make us do what we need to.

So here’s another reason to get in your vitamin D, sharpish: A new study suggests that taking vitamin D pills could save us from colds and flu.

The study, published in [The British Medical Journal](http://www.bmj.com/content/356/bmj.i6583), suggests that taking vitamin D supplements may have more benefits than we previously thought.

While we already knew vitamin D is important for bone and muscle health, the researchers now reckon that pills can protect against acute respiratory infections – meaning colds, flu, and pneumonia.

Benefits of vitamin D:

* Vital for absorbing calcium and phosphorus
* Can reduce risk of diseases such as heart disease and multiple sclerosis
* Can improve immune system function
* Has been shown to fight depression
* Strengthens bones
* Can reduce inflammation

Experts are now suggesting that alongside eating vitamin D rich food, it’s worth fortifying the benefits with a vitamin D supplement.

The study pooled data from 11,321 people from 25 separate trials, to figure out if vitamin D supplements can prevent respiratory tract infections, ranging from a cold to pneumonia.

The team found that one person would avoid infection out of every 33 taking vitamin D supplements.

Which might not sound spectacular, but it’s actually more effective than the flu vaccination.

One of the researchers, Professor Adrian Martineau, said: ‘Assuming a UK population of 65 million, and that 70% have at least one acute respiratory infection each year, then daily or weekly vitamin D supplements will mean 3.25 million fewer people would get at least one acute respiratory infection a year.’

That’s a worthwhile result for just popping a daily vitamin D pill, we think.

While Public Health England says that the data is not conclusive, they *do*recommend taking supplements in autumn and winter, or year-round for anyone who doesn’t get much exposure to sunlight.

We previously spoke to [GoNutrition](http://gonutrition.com/" \t "_blank) nutrition expert Ciaran Hegarty to find out how to get more vitamin D, and he recommended that even if you are making your diet more vitamin D packed, it’s still worth taking a supplement to get the full range of benefits.

‘Vitamin D, also known as ‘the sunshine vitamin’, is an essential vitamin which is required by the body for healthy function,’ Ciaran told metro.co.uk.

‘Some vitamin D is obtained through the diet from oily fish and eggs, however the majority is synthesised by the body through exposure to sunlight.

‘In countries such as the UK where exposure to sunlight is limited, particularly in the winter months, a vitamin D supplement is recommended.’

Good to know.

Foods rich in vitamin D:

* Tofu
* Oily fish
* Eggs
* Fortified orange juice
* Almond, soya, and hazelnut milk

So, to recap. Vitamin D is very good for bone health, immune system function, and the prevention of disease such as heart disease. It also might prevent you from getting a cold or developing the flu.

Make sure your diet is vitamin D rich, but definitely consider taking supplements if you live in an area that doesn’t get much sun (like the UK). It’ll do you good.