**SUNNY VITAMIN D-LIGHTS**

**Can daily vitamin D supplements prevent flu just as well as vaccine and which foods is it found in?**

Taking the 'sunshine vitamin' can cut the chances of respiratory infection by 12% - the protection level offered by the flu vaccine

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

Those who take the 2p-a-pill “sunshine vitamin” regularly cut their chances of respiratory infection by 12 per cent — the protection level the flu vaccine offers.

And those with the biggest deficiencies who took it daily cut their risk by half, Queen Mary University London found.

Vitamin D is thought to fend off respiratory infections by boosting antibiotic-like substances in the lungs.

It is produced by the body when skin is exposed to sunlight and found in fatty fish, cheese and egg yolk, but most people do not get enough.

But “sun safe” messages about skin cancer have led to more people covering up when outside and most people do not get enough vitamin D in their diet.

The results fit with the observation that colds and flu are most common in winter and spring, when levels of vitamin D are at their lowest.

Respiratory infections lead to 35,000 deaths and 300,000 hospital admissions a year in the UK.

Researchers say the findings strengthen the argument for fortifying foods with vitamin D – such as cereals, orange juice and dairy products.

Study leader Professor Adrian Martineau said 3.25million fewer people get at least one acute respiratory infection each year if everyone took a daily or weekly vitamin D supplement.

Study leader Prof Adrian Martineau said: “This research has yielded the first definitive evidence that vitamin D really does protect against respiratory infections.

“Fortification provides a steady, low-level intake of vitamin D that has virtually eliminated profound deficiency in several countries.”

**What food is vitamin D found in?**

Vitamin D is vital to help your body absorb calcium as well as strengthening the immune system.

It is found in;

* Oily fish such as salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel
* Fortified foods such as fat spreads and some breakfast cereals
* Red meat
* Liver
* Egg yolks