

MORE EVIDENCE OF BENEFIT FOR VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTATION

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A daily supplement of vitamin D reduces the risk of falling among older people by 19% according to a new study published in the British Medical Journal today.¹ People over the age of 65 years should supplement with vitamin D to prevent falls, say the authors of this paper.

Commenting on the study, Dr Carrie Ruxton an independent scientific advisor to the Health Supplements Information Service notes: “This paper adds to the growing body of evidence that vitamin D supplementation is beneficial for health. Falls in older people, risking serious bone fractures, are a public health problem. This new study shows that a daily supplement containing vitamin D, such as a multivitamin, could help to lower the risk in this vulnerable group of people with the potential to reduce hospital admission and cost to the NHS.”

“Looking at the study in detail, it is important to note that it was a meta-analysis of eight fall prevention trials, involving 2426 people, to assess the effectiveness of vitamin D in preventing falls among older individuals (aged 65 or more). Both types of supplementary vitamin D – D2 and D3 – were evaluated. Supplemental vitamin D in a dose of 700-1000 IU (17-25 mcg) daily reduced falls by 19% for vitamin D2 and up to 26% with vitamin D3.

“This effect was independent of age, type of dwelling or additional calcium supplementation. The effect was significant within two to five months of starting supplementation and continued beyond 12 months.”

Dr Ruxton notes: “The authors also concluded that thanks to the resulting data from this study, to reduce the risk of falling, a daily intake of 700-1000 IU supplemental vitamin D is warranted in all individuals aged 65 and older.”

¹ Bischoff-Ferrari HA, Dawson-Hughes B, Staehlin HB et al. Fall prevention with vitamin D. A meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials. British Medical Journal 2009;339:b3692 doi:10.1136/bmj.b3692

Falls are a major cause of disability and leading cause of mortality due to injury in older people in England and Wales. About one third of people over the age of 65 years will fall at least once a year. ²Over 400,000 older people attend accident and emergency departments in England each year following an accident and 14,000 people a year die in the UK as a result of osteoporotic hip fracture.³

² Bite Size, Best Practice. Falls awareness. Sharing learning across NHS Portsmouth. March 2007. <http://www.porthosp.nhs.uk/BSBP/bsbpno10.pdf>

³ Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Falls Prevention and Management Strategy, <http://www.fallsprevention.co.uk/Falls-Strategy-040102.pdf>