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March 31, 2009

VITAL SIGNS

Vitamin D Pills May Prevent Fractures in Older Adults

By NICHOLAS BAKALAR

[Vitamin D](#) supplements may help prevent fractures in people over 65, provided they take enough of the right kind. A new review of clinical trials appears to show a strong dose-dependent effect for vitamin D in lowering the risk for nonvertebral fractures in the elderly.

The lead author of the analysis, Heike A. Bischoff-Ferrari, a professor of medicine at the University of Zurich, said that "vitamin D in a high enough dose is not only beneficial in the frail older population, but it also works in those still living at home and able to take care of themselves."

The researchers, writing in the March 23 issue of *The Archives of Internal Medicine*, [reviewed 12 randomized trials](#) that together included more than 65,000 subjects. Doses under 400 international units a day had no discernible effect, but for doses larger than that, the pooled data showed a 20 percent reduction in the risk for all nonvertebral fractures, and an 18 percent reduction for broken hips.

The type of vitamin D made a difference. The effect of vitamin D3 was significant, with a 23 percent risk reduction, but there was no significant reduction with vitamin D2. The authors suggest that D3 is more effective in maintaining blood levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D, the active form that the supplement takes in the body.

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