

Vitamin D3 and omega-3 fatty acids not helpful in reducing risk of frailty

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Frailty is defined as reduced physiological reserve and ability to cope with acute stresses. Up to half of adults over the age of 85 live with frailty and thus, preventative measures are greatly needed. Investigators at Brigham and Women's Hospital, a founding member of the Mass General Brigham health care system, were interested in examining whether vitamin D₃ or marine omega-3 fatty acid supplementation reduced risk of frailty.

The researchers analyzed data from the VITamin D and Omega-3 Trial (VITAL), a clinical trial of more than 25,000 U.S. adults, also led by investigators from the Brigham. Participants completed questionnaires before the trial began, six months after its start, and annually throughout the trial's five-year duration. Assessment of frailty included measures of physical function, cognition, mood, and general health.

The investigators found that neither vitamin D₃ nor omega-3-fatty acid supplementation had any effect on frailty scores during the time period. They conclude that these results do not support routine use of vitamin D₃ or omega-3 fatty acid

supplements for frailty prevention in generally healthy, older adults.

"Our new findings from VITAL are in line with previous results that do not suggest a role of vitamin D₃ or omega-3 supplements for most healthy, community dwelling older adults," said corresponding author Ariela Orkaby, MD, MPH, from the Division of Aging.

"We should consider deprescribing unnecessary pills, and instead promoting healthy lifestyle habits. Regular exercise and the Mediterranean diet are proven strategies for prevention of frailty and should be encouraged for all [older adults](#)."

"These new findings from VITAL are an important reminder that [dietary supplements](#) are not miracle pills or elixirs of youth," added JoAnn Manson, MD, DrPH, director of the main VITAL trial and chief of the Division of Preventive Medicine at the Brigham.

The study is published in *JAMA Network Open*.

More information: Effect of Vitamin D3 and Omega-3 Fatty Acid Supplementation on Risk of Frailty An Ancillary Study of a Randomized Clinical Trial, *JAMA Network Open* (2022). DOI: [10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.31206](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.31206)

Provided by Brigham and Women's Hospital

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