

New research from a team at Harvard Medical School shows that long-term daily multivitamin supplementation significantly decreases the risk of age-related cataract development in men.

Long-term multivitamin use reduces cataract risk in men

Cataracts are one of the leading causes of visual impairments in older adults. Many observational studies have shown that people with higher dietary intake or blood levels of antioxidant nutrients have lower rates of cataracts, suggesting that nutritional factors may play a contributing role in this disease.

In a recent study published in the journal *Ophthalmology*, researchers from Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School published results from a large study of middle-aged men suggesting a protective benefit of multivitamins against the risk of developing cataracts.

The current study included 11,497 men over the age of 50 who were enrolled in the larger Physicians' Health Study II. The men were randomized to receive a daily multivitamin (Centrum Silver) or a placebo beginning in 1997 and were followed for an average of 11.2 years. During the course of the study period 1,817 cases of cataracts were diagnosed.

Among the group of men taking the multivitamin there was a significant 9% lower risk of cataract development in comparison to the group taking the placebo. When nuclear sclerosis (center of eye lens) was analyzed specifically, the risk was reduced by 13% in the multivitamin group. The researchers also noted that the trend toward multivitamin benefit began midway through the follow-up period and was more significant in older men.

The results of this study support the findings of 2 other previous trials demonstrating that long-term daily multivitamin supplementation may have a beneficial effect on the risk of cataract development. Impaired vision due to cataracts is estimated to affect 10 million U.S. adults, so even a moderate reduction in the risk of cataract development would have a significant impact on public health.

Christen WG. Effects of multivitamin supplement on cataract and age-related macular degeneration in a randomized trial of male physicians. *Ophthalmology*. 2014 Feb;121(2):525-34.