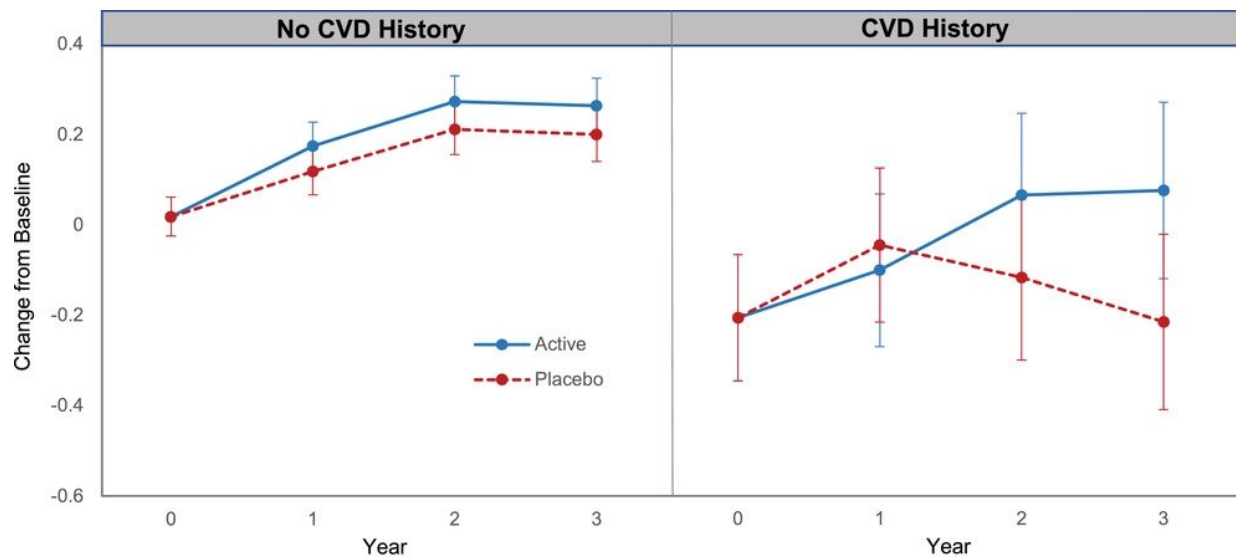


Daily multivitamin may improve cognition and possibly protect against decline

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Three-year change in global cognition composite for the active and placebo multivitamin-mineral groups by history of cardiovascular disease, which was based on self-report of transient ischemic attack, congestive heart failure, coronary artery bypass graft, angioplasty, or stent (plotted values: mean standardized (z) scores and 95% confidence intervals). Credit: *Alzheimer's & Dementia* (2022). DOI: 10.1002/alz.12767

Could taking a daily multivitamin help maintain cognitive health with aging and possibly prevent cognitive decline? According to new research from Wake Forest University School of Medicine, conducted in collaboration with Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, taking a

daily supplement may improve cognition in older adults, but additional studies are needed to confirm these findings before any health recommendations are made. The study also showed that daily use of a cocoa extract supplement does not benefit cognition.

The findings were recently published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia*.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, more than 6.5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease, and 1 in 3 seniors die with the disease or another form of dementia.

"There's an urgent need for safe and affordable interventions to protect cognition against decline in [older adults](#)," said Laura D. Baker, Ph.D., professor of gerontology and geriatric medicine at Wake Forest University School of Medicine and co-principal investigator of the trial, along with Mark Espeland, Ph.D., professor of gerontology and geriatric medicine at Wake Forest University School of Medicine.

The COcoa Supplement and Multivitamin Outcomes Study for the Mind (COSMOS-Mind) was an ancillary study to the COSMOS trial led by Brigham and Women's Hospital that randomized 21,442 men and women across the U.S. The study investigated whether taking a daily [cocoa](#) extract supplement or a daily multivitamin-mineral supplement reduces the risk of developing heart disease, stroke, cancer and other health outcomes.

According to Baker, cocoa extract is rich in compounds called flavanols, and past research suggests that these compounds may positively impact cognition. Baker also said that several micronutrients and minerals are needed to support normal body and [brain function](#), and deficiencies in older adults may increase the risk for cognitive decline and dementia.

In COSMOS-Mind, researchers tested whether daily administration of

cocoa extract versus placebo and a multivitamin-mineral versus placebo improved cognition in older adults. More than 2,200 participants, ages 65 and older, enrolled and were followed for three years. Participants completed tests over the telephone at baseline and annually to evaluate memory and other cognitive abilities.

"Our study showed that although cocoa extract did not affect cognition, daily multivitamin-mineral supplementation resulted in statistically significant cognitive improvement," Baker said. "This is the first evidence of cognitive benefit in a large longer-term study of multivitamin supplementation in older adults."

The researchers estimated that three years of multivitamin supplementation roughly translated to a 60% slowing of cognitive decline (about 1.8 years). The benefits were relatively more pronounced in participants with significant cardiovascular disease, which is important because these individuals are already at increased risk for cognitive impairment and decline.

"It's too early to recommend daily multivitamin supplementation to prevent [cognitive decline](#)," Baker said. "While these preliminary findings are promising, additional research is needed in a larger and more diverse group of people. Also, we still have work to do to better understand why the [multivitamin](#) might benefit cognition in older adults."

More information: Laura D. Baker et al, Effects of cocoa extract and a multivitamin on cognitive function: A randomized clinical trial, *Alzheimer's & Dementia* (2022). [DOI: 10.1002/alz.12767](https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.12767)

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