

Maybe Vitamin D isn't such the 'miracle supplement as the hype—and many scientists—have long claimed

For a while vitamin D was looking like a bona fide health elixir. It was recognized a century ago as the cure for rickets, a childhood disease that causes weak and deformed bones. Then, in the early 2000s, researchers began amassing a pile of studies suggesting that low vitamin D levels could be a factor in cancer, cardiovascular disease, dementia, depression, diabetes, autoimmune diseases, fractures, respiratory illnesses and Parkinson's disease. It seemed reasonable to think that raising our levels of this simple vitamin—one that our bodies make when lit up by sunshine and that we can get more of from supplements—could cure practically whatever ailed us.

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Then the bottom fell out. Although thousands of studies had linked low levels of vitamin D to an assortment of medical conditions, when scientists tried administering it as a means to prevent or treat those problems, the wonder supplement failed miserably. The notion that our lives would be better if we all just raised our vitamin D levels began to look like a fantasy. The idea that vitamin D deficiency was widespread also crumbled. It turned out that notions of what constitutes a deficiency were based on a dubious understanding to begin with.

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The story of how vitamin D was discovered, rocketed to miracle status and then returned to Earth illustrates the sometimes jagged path of scientific discovery. It's also a cautionary tale about the need to interpret scientific results with humility.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)