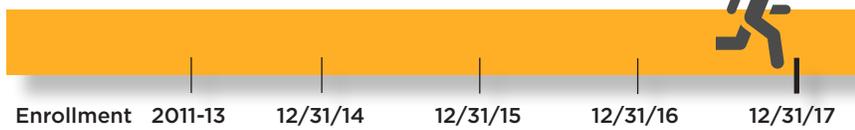




News and information for participants in the *VIT*amin D and *Om*ega-3 *Tria*L (VITAL)

VITAL study timeline: Nearing the pill-taking finish line!

Pill-taking Timeline



Thank you very much for your continued commitment to VITAL. As you know, study pill-taking will end on December 31, 2017. VITAL is getting very close to achieving its goal of determining whether vitamin D or omega-3 fatty acid (fish oil) supplements reduce the risk of developing cancer, heart disease, or stroke. Here's a reminder and an update about what to expect after the pill-taking period ends.

Will I receive a questionnaire when the pill-taking period is over?

Yes. In early January 2018, you will receive a brief questionnaire via postal mail that asks about new diagnoses of cardiovascular disease and cancer, risk factors for these diseases, and other health conditions. This information is needed to determine the outcomes of the trial. If you have provided your e-mail address to us, we will also send you an e-mail with a link to an online version

of the questionnaire. We ask that you complete either the online questionnaire or the postal questionnaire, whichever is easier for you—but please complete only one type of questionnaire. Choosing the online option will facilitate our timely collection of important end-of-trial data.

When will you tell me the type of study capsules that were in my calendar packs?

Within six weeks of receiving your completed questionnaire, we will send you a letter stating whether your study capsules contained active vitamin D, active omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil), or placebo. We will also send you a certificate recognizing and thanking you for your contributions to VITAL.

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From the VITAL Study Directors

Dear VITAL participant,

Thank you! As the end of the pill-taking phase of VITAL approaches, we would like you to know how very grateful we are for your many years of extraordinary dedication to this long-term study. Because of your efforts, VITAL is now poised to answer the questions of whether vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil) supplements can prevent cancer, heart disease, stroke, and other health conditions. Please help VITAL reach its goals by taking your study capsules until December

31, 2017 and by completing the end-of-pill-taking questionnaire in early January 2018. We would also like to ask that you remain a participant of the VITAL study for two more years by continuing to fill out periodic health questionnaires—one in the latter part of 2018 and one in 2019. The data gathered on these additional questionnaires will be valuable for determining the longer-term balance of benefits and risks of vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acid supplementation and for exploring new hypotheses regarding disease prevention and health promotion. During this two-year follow-up period, we will

continue to send you newsletters and other communications to keep you informed about the progress and findings of the study, as well as health topics that we hope will be of interest.

Thank you again for helping to make VITAL a success!

JoAnn Manson, MD
Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
Brigham and Women's
Hospital



Julie Buring, ScD
Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
Brigham and Women's
Hospital



VITAL on the Go

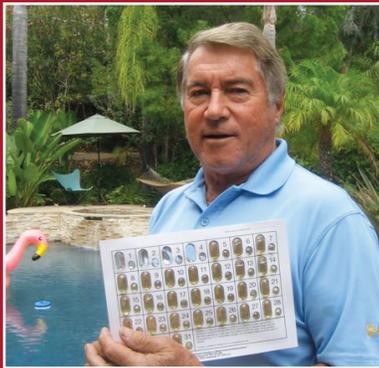
Joyce S., of Maryland, writes, "In a 'crabby' mood in Annapolis, Maryland! Home of the Great Blue! Great dipped in butter! Enjoyed a tasty feast with family. Haven't missed a pill in five years."



Chris J., of California, at the Uyuni Salt Flats in Bolivia, is on a quest to visit 100 countries before her 80th birthday. She reports, "I have about 21 countries to go to reach my goal."



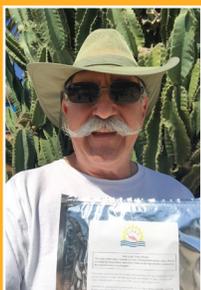
Daniel D., of Mississippi, at the Tongariro Alpine Crossing in New Zealand, writes that "[t]he volcano in the background [Mount Ngauruhoe] served as 'Mount Doom' in the Lord of the Rings movies."



John M., of California, at home.



Leeann S., of Massachusetts, with chinstrap penguins in Antarctica, writes, "I teach nutrition and health, and I spend a lot of time answering questions about supplements. Now I get to be a part of the research on two popular supplements. Nothing impresses students more than real life experience..."



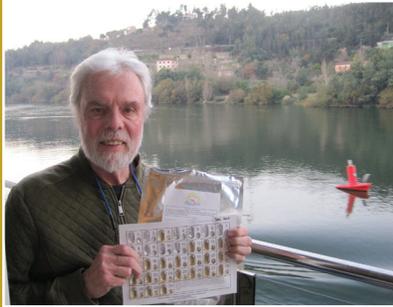
John B., of North Carolina, vacationing in Islamorada, Florida.

Ahmad S., of Oklahoma, at an archaeological site in Persepolis, Iran, wrote in March 2017, "I am currently visiting Iran, and have been taking my pills religiously and explaining the study to everyone that sees me taking the pills after breakfast. They are very interested to learn about the final outcome of the study. They all wonder whether I am taking the real thing or the placebo."



Participant Perspective

What does VITAL mean to me?



Rich A., of Massachusetts, on the Douro River, Portugal.



Charles H., at U.S. Coast Guard Station Wilmette Harbor, in his home state of Illinois.



Lois C., of Wisconsin, reports that she didn't miss a day of study pill taking during a month-long safari in Africa, with stops in South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Tanzania.

“I started the study simply because I could. I knew that I met the requirements and believed I would be able to stick to the program and help build the body of data needed. Yes, it is important to me to support a study that seeks a better understanding of how our daily habits can predict and prevent heart disease and stroke; since both my sister and my mother suffered strokes, I had a special interest in that particular aspect of the study. I have continued in the study in part because I believe in finishing what you start, but also because there is a sense of pride that comes with supporting such research. My wife and others in my family are aware of my participation, and together we are all curious what the research will reveal. And ultimately, I am interested in my own health; whether I'm taking fish oil and vitamin D, or I am part of the control group, just the awareness of my habits, and commitment to daily routine, has been a benefit for me. Thank you for maintaining the study with integrity and professionalism. Being a part of this is something to be proud of.” **Lawrence M.**, of Georgia

“I participate in your study because I believe in the importance of preventing illness, and because my mother and sisters had cancer and heart problems, and I hope studies such as yours will help prevent these in the future.” **Edith B.**, of Virginia

“The VITAL study will provide scientific evidence of the benefits or lack thereof of vitamin D and omega-3s. As I am fortunate enough to have benefited from previous studies that have helped save lives and longevities, I felt compelled to pay back to society and science.” **Ernest K.**, of Georgia

“Just wanted to be a part of something that might contribute to the health and well-being of the general population.” **Darrel D.**, of Missouri

“I was honored to be asked to participate in this study. I've not missed a single dose and at 66 my health is excellent. It is my intention to continue this run and look forward to seeing the results as well as to find out what type of [pill] I was taking.” **Randy L.**, of Tennessee

“Many of my friends and family spend hundreds of dollars taking various supplements on the off-chance that they will do some good—based, as far as I can understand, on anecdotal evidence of dubious value. I am happy to participate in a study large enough, long enough, and rigorous enough to provide useful information on the value of two widely consumed supplements. I'm looking forward to the results.” **Susan N.**, of California

“I decided to join the VITAL study because it seemed very well-designed, having such a large amount of participants over such a good length of time. As a person trained in science, I have been motivated to participate in VITAL because I would like to know the answer to whether fish oil has a benefit. It appears many people have been willing to pay quite a bit of money to ingest fish oil and other supplements, and I think VITAL may actually provide the answer as to whether they are really gaining a real benefit. Thank you for allowing me to be a member of such a vital study!” **Mary D.**, of Florida

— continued on page 4 —

FOR A SAMPLING OF ADDITIONAL COMMENTS, SEE WWW.VITALSTUDY.ORG.

“VITAL to me means something very important. I wanted to participate in the study for a couple of reasons. One is of course the desire to possibly assist in ways to prevent devastating illnesses and also for a selfish reason—that of possibly preventing those issues from affecting me. A win-win as the cost is 0 and the inconvenience minimal. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of the study.” **Jacquita C.**, of Florida

“I participated in the VITAL study to assist in the expansion of our knowledge base about these supplements. Do they promote health, have no effect, or harm health? It is a question worth answering, if possible. I look forward to receiving the study’s results. Thanks for the opportunity to participate.” **Stephen S.**, of Michigan

“I want to contribute to understanding ways to prevent cancer, heart disease, and stroke. I enjoy participating in medical research.” **Walter S.**, of Illinois

“I have never participated in a study of this kind and the subject matter is interesting. As an African American, I think it especially important to participate in these kinds of studies even if they are not directly focused on a particular group. However, I think the findings are more representative of the population.” **Warren B.**, of Maryland

“I joined VITAL—and am taking [the] study pills faithfully—because I want to contribute to understanding ways to prevent cancer, heart disease, and stroke. That is what motivated me to join VITAL—and why I think it is important to continue participating until the study is over. I worked at Penn State, a research university, and so I know that getting volunteers as subject[s] in a research study is important. And my graduate degree is in nutrition, so I have a professional interest in the answer.” **Linda M.**, of Pennsylvania

“Even if it doesn’t benefit me, I want next generations, including my own family, to benefit from the results. That is why I also joined the Women’s Health Initiative many years ago and take part in various small projects as I learn about them. It is also one of the most useful ways to volunteer.” **Judith B.**, of North Carolina

“I participate in this study because I want to make a difference in the study of cancer and heart disease. It is a small but invaluable contribution to a body of knowledge that will help someone someday. It is exciting to be a part of this and to make a difference.” **Carolyn D.**, of Washington

“I have always been interested in medicine. When I received the invitation to participate in this study, I jumped at the chance. I want to be able to help in the understanding of health and the human body as much as I can.” **Margaret B.**, of Arizona

— **TIMELINE** continued from page 1 —

When will you notify me of the results of the study?

It will take several months for us to gather and review the medical records related to the health outcomes reported by participants on the questionnaire filled out in early January 2018. Once we finish this, we will analyze the data and submit manuscripts with the study’s main findings to major medical journals. We anticipate that the main results papers will be published in mid- to late 2018. Upon publication of these results, we will notify participants. If you have shared your e-mail address with us, we will send you an e-mail that points you to a summary of the findings on the VITAL website, www.vitalstudy.org. If we don’t have your e-mail address, we will

send you a letter by postal mail that summarizes the study’s main findings. If you would like to be added to our e-mail list, please let us know (our contact information is below). Please be assured that we will use your e-mail address only to communicate with you about VITAL and will not share your e-mail address with any person or group outside of VITAL.

What should I do with the leftover study capsules?

You may wish to keep any leftover calendar packs until the VITAL results are published. Depending on these results, participants who were assigned to active vitamin D and/or active omega-3 fatty acid supplements may choose to take (or not to take) any remaining study capsules on their own.

I know I will receive a questionnaire in January 2018, right after pill-taking ends. Will I receive additional study questionnaires after that?

Yes. We will send you two regular-length health questionnaires—one during the second half of 2018 and one in 2019. The supplemental information gathered on these questionnaires will be essential in addressing the long-term health effects of the VITAL interventions and also allowing for exploration of emerging hypotheses regarding health promotion and disease prevention.



**VITamin D and
Omega-3 Trial
(VITAL Study)**

900 Commonwealth Avenue, Floor 3
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
Telephone: 1-800-388-3963
E-mail: vitalstudy@partners.org
Website: www.vitalstudy.org