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Vitamin D supplements in pregnancy linked to stronger bones in kids

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Women who take vitamin D supplements during a pregnancy may be giving their kids the legacy of stronger bones, new British research suggests.

Children whose moms took vitamin D supplements when pregnant had stronger, denser bones at the age of 7 compared to the kids of women who didn't, a study from the University of Southampton shows.

It's an head start on bone health that might last a lifetime, said lead researcher Dr. Rebecca Moon.

"This early intervention represents an important public health strategy. It strengthens children's bones and reduces the risk of conditions like osteoporosis and fractures in later life," said Moon, a clinical lecturer in child health at the university.

Her team published its findings in the November issue of The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

It's long been understood that vitamin D — often called the "sunshine vitamin" because human skin manufactures it upon contact with sunlight — plays a key role in bone development and health.

As the British team explained, the nutrient regulates the body's levels of calcium and phosphate — two minerals needed for strong bones, teeth and muscle health.

The bone health of 454 of the children resulting from those pregnancies was tested as they reached the ages of 4, 6 and 7.