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## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Consumers reassured about the use of multivitamins**

Dietary supplements including multivitamins have a legitimate place in the wider health system and remain important for people whose dietary intake is inadequate, the Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) said today.

ASMI is responding to a study on the use of dietary supplements and mortality rates in older women.<sup>i</sup>

ASMI Regulatory and Scientific Affairs Director, Steven Scarff said the authors of the observational study acknowledged that they did not have information on the nutritional status of participants. The authors also didn't hold detailed information on the supplements being used, including why they were being used, or the amount taken each day.

Importantly, the study does not show that vitamin supplements cause early death. It is possible that women were taking supplements in response to an illness that could have caused their earlier death.

"It's crucial to recognise that general vitamin, mineral and supplement products in Australia are regulated under TGA guidelines, which stipulate a safe maximum daily intake (RDI) for many of the active ingredients discussed in this US study. "For example supplements in Australia cannot exceed 24mg of Iron, 200mg of vitamin B6, 5mg of copper or 50mg of zinc per day.

"Dietary vitamin and mineral supplements are important for many people. They do not replace a balanced diet but they are useful for those with vitamin or mineral deficiencies, and they play a vital role in health and wellbeing," he said.

ASMI said that calcium supplementation, in particular, is a well-tested and widely available option for increasing bone density and reducing the risk of fractures, and consumers should continue to follow recommended levels of calcium intake.

"Consumers have made it very clear that they see a distinct role for these complementary medicines as part of an integrated approach to personal health, and they want GPs, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals to assist them in making the right choices," Mr Scarff said.

As with any medication, it is important that consumers follow the label instructions and consult with their healthcare practitioner if they have any concerns.

<sup>1</sup> Jaakko Mursu, PhD; Kim Robien, PhD; Lisa J. Harnack, DrPH, MPH; Kyong Park, PhD; David R. Jacobs Jr, PhD, *Archives of Internal Medicine*. 2011;171(18):1625-1633.

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About ASMI: The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) is the peak industry body for the Australian self care industry representing consumer healthcare products including over-the-counter medicines and complementary medicines. ASMI's mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all Australians at a reasonable cost. ASMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy. [www.asmi.com.au](http://www.asmi.com.au)

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