Depressed people are twice as likely to develop certain forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease.

A new study found that 22 percent of participants who had depression at the beginning of the study ended up developing dementia, compared to about 17 percent of those who were not depressed.

Food Consumer reports:

"One real possibility ... is that depression and dementia share some common cause ... vitamin D may be the link between the two.

[Researchers] found that in November, people with serum levels of vitamin D falling in the highest quartile were 49 percent less likely to experience depression ... Additionally, vitamin D helps prevent dementia, such as that exhibited in those with Alzheimer's disease."

Further, some patients in a separate study got relief from depression by taking omega-3 fats. The ones who improved -- about half the group -- were those who didn't also have a diagnosis of an anxiety disorder.

Depressed people who also had anxiety disorders didn't get any clear benefit from taking the supplements compared to placebo.

Reuters reports:

"These findings ... add to the confusion about whether omega-3 fatty acids really help depression ... At least some of the confusion is due to the fact that researchers rarely test these substances in any standard way. Some studies have looked at omega-3 as a stand-alone therapy; others have tested it in combination with antidepressants. The formulations often vary, too."
Alzheimer’s disease and depression may not seem to have much in common at face value, other than both being brain disorders, but they share a surprising similarity that could easily be remedied: they’re both linked to low vitamin D.

Now that this new study has also found that people with depression are twice as likely to develop certain forms of dementia, it highlights the fact that there could be a common cause, and that could very well be a lack of vitamin D.

**Vitamin D’s Role in Depression**

Making sure you’re getting enough sunlight exposure to have healthy vitamin D levels is a crucial factor in treating depression or keeping it at bay.

One previous study found that people with the lowest levels of vitamin D were 11 times more prone to be depressed than those who had normal levels. Vitamin D deficiency is actually more the norm than the exception, and has previously been implicated in both psychiatric and neurological disorders.

Vitamin D receptors have been identified throughout the human body, and that includes in your brain. Researchers have located metabolic pathways for vitamin D in the hippocampus and cerebellum of the brain, areas that are involved in planning, processing of information, and the formation of new memories.

Sufficient vitamin D is also imperative for proper functioning of your immune system to combat inflammation, and other research has discovered that depressed people tend to have higher levels of inflammation in their brains. Ditto for those with Alzheimer's disease.

**Vitamin D for Alzheimer’s**

In terms of Alzheimer's disease, in 2007 researchers at the University of Wisconsin uncovered strong links between low levels of vitamin D in Alzheimer’s patients and poor outcomes on cognitive tests.

Scientists launched the study after family members of Alzheimer's patients who were treated with large doses of prescription vitamin D reported that they were acting and performing better than before.
Researchers believe that optimal vitamin D levels may enhance the amount of important chemicals in your brain and protect brain cells.

Researchers from the University of Manchester also found that getting more vitamin D helps elderly people stay mentally fit. Researchers compared the cognitive performance of more than 3,000 men aged 40 to 79 and found those with low vitamin D levels performed less well on a task designed to test mental agility.

Further, the brain benefits of vitamin D have also been described in several experimental models, indicating the potential value of vitamin D in helping neurodegenerative and neuroimmune diseases. In addition, vitamin D induces glioma (a type of tumor) cell death, making the hormone of potential interest in the management of brain tumors.

This is particularly exciting as the pervasive exposure we have to cell phones will increase our risk for brain cancer, in addition to any intake of aspartame that we have, which is also another known brain cancer risk.

There's even evidence indicating vitamin D improves your brain's detoxification process. So there is plenty of exciting new research emerging highlighting vitamin D's importance to your brain health, and given the absolute simplicity of optimizing your levels -- and the myriad of other health benefits doing so offers -- it's an easy and phenomenal way to protect your future health.

**Vitamin D Deficiency is Common**

There seems to be no end in sight when it comes to the potential health benefits of vitamin D. There's constantly new research being published, demonstrating the health benefits of vitamin D and the health risks associated with vitamin D deficiency.

Perhaps the most telling piece of information is the fact that higher vitamin D levels significantly reduce mortality rates from ALL causes!

However, most people are not getting enough of this crucial nutrient.

In the United States, the late winter average vitamin D is only about 15-18 ng/ml, which is considered a very serious deficiency state. In fact, it's estimated that over 95 percent of U.S. senior citizens may be deficient, along with 85 percent of the American public.

One thing is clear. If you maintain optimal vitamin D levels, your cells will function optimally, which in turn will help prevent all sorts of health ailments and chronic diseases.
Another Important Nutrient to Fight Both Depression and Alzheimer's

Depression and Alzheimer's may indeed have more in common than meets the eye, as in addition to vitamin D, both can also be influenced positively by omega-3 fats.

A diet rich in omega-3 fats has been found to ward off both Alzheimer's disease and depression.

Omega-3 fats are essential for your optimal brain function, and that includes regulating your mood, fighting depression and protecting your mental functioning. In fact, the evidence has become so compelling that some experts in the field encourage all mental health professionals to ensure that their patients suffering from depression have an adequate intake of omega-3 fats.

Also like vitamin D, optimizing your omega-3 fat intake is very easy, provided you choose the best source of animal-based omega-3 fats: krill oil.

There is some confusion over fish oil and krill oil when it comes to omega-3 fats, in part because the major advantages to krill oil are just now being revealed.

Krill oil, like fish oil, contains omega-3 fats such as eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexanoic acid (DHA). However, in fish oil, these omega-3 fats are found in a triglyceride molecule that has to be broken down in your gut into its base fatty acids EPA and DHA.

Because of this, about 80-85 percent of it is never absorbed and instead is eliminated in your intestine. This is what causes about 50 percent of people to "burp up" the fish oil taste and not tolerate fish oil well at all.

Once the fatty acids are absorbed into your bloodstream your liver then has to attach it to phosphatidyl choline for it to be used by your body. The amazing beauty of krill oil is that they are found in a double-chain phospholipid structure. The fats in human cell walls are also in the phospholipid form, so your body uses virtually 100 percent of it.

Unpublished new data suggests krill oil is actually absorbed 10-15 times better than fish oil.

Additionally, krill oil has the powerful antioxidant Astaxanthin, which prevents the perishable DHA and EPA from going rancid. The vast majority of fish oil being sold is actually rancid before you even open the bottle, as it doesn't contain this antioxidant.

Many doctors in Europe are switching from conventional drugs to krill oil to support healthy, normal lipid levels and cardiovascular health, and the great news is that it seems to work at a lower dose so you may only need one 500 mg capsule per day, making it far more effective and affordable than fish oil.

Of course, krill oil and vitamin D are just two natural "weapons" to keep your brain healthy.