VITALS VAULT

FREE GUIDE

Health Study Checker

A one-page checklist to judge any health study in the news in five minutes. Tick what you can find in the article or the abstract.

TICK WHAT YOU CAN FIND IN THE STORY

- [ ] Type of study (trial or observational)
- [ ] Randomized?
- [ ] Blinded?
- [ ] How many people?
- [ ] How long it lasted
- [ ] People like me?
- [ ] Main outcome named
- [ ] Absolute numbers given
- [ ] Confidence interval shown
- [ ] Funder and conflicts listed
- [ ] Side effects reported
- [ ] Registered in advance

THREE QUICK CHECKS

Check	What to look for
Main outcome	The study is built around one main outcome. Missing it usually makes it a null study.
Significant or meaningful	A 1 mmHg blood pressure drop can be statistically significant yet not matter.
Confidence interval	If the interval around a hazard ratio spans 1.0, the result is not significant.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- [ ] Does this study apply to someone like me?
- [ ] What was the absolute risk, not just the percent change?
- [ ] Who paid for it, and do the authors report conflicts?
- [ ] Is this one study, or do others agree?

Sources: Teaching episode on reading scientific studies, 2021. The rules of thumb are the speaker's, not universal laws.

Educational only. Not medical advice, and not a diagnosis. Take this to your own clinician. vitalsvault.com