

Current advice from the Department of Health about Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps to regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body. These nutrients are needed to keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy.

A lack of Vitamin D can lead to bone deformities such as rickets in children and bone pain and tenderness as a result of osteomalacia in adults.

Good sources of Vitamin D

From about late March /April to the end of September most of the population should be able to get sufficient vitamin D from the action of sunlight on our skin. The vitamin is made by our bodies as a reaction to sunlight exposure. However because of where we live and the lack of sunlight between October and late March our bodies do not make vitamin D during these times.

Vitamin D is also found in some foods, good food sources are:

- Oily fish; salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel
- Red meat and liver
- Egg yolks
- Fortified foods; most fat spreads, some breakfast cereals

How much vitamin D do we need?

Breastfed babies from birth to one year of age should be given a daily supplement drops containing 8.5-10 micrograms of vitamin D to ensure they get enough. The drops should be given on a sterilised teaspoon, by mouth, aiming towards the inside of baby's cheek.

Formula fed babies do not require vitamin D supplements until they are drinking less than 500 ml (about a pint) of formula in 24 hours. This is because infant formula is fortified with vitamin D. When drinking under 500 ml in 24 hours then daily supplementation with 8.5-10 micrograms of vitamin D should begin.

Children from 1-4 years old should be given a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D.

Vitamin D supplements or vitamin drops containing vitamin D (for use by under-fives) can be bought at most pharmacies and supermarkets. **Some preparations contain peanut oil and are not recommended for peanut or soya allergic babies and children.**

Adults and children over 5 years old

Because vitamin D is found only in a small number of foods it can be difficult to get enough from foods alone. So everyone is now advised to consider taking a daily 10 microgram supplement vitamin D supplement. In the Spring and summer months however when there is more sunlight the majority of people over 5 years old will probably obtain enough vitamin D from skin exposure to sunlight when outdoors, so a supplement may not be required in these months.

Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers are advised to take a daily supplement of 10 micrograms of vitamin D. Breastfeeding mothers should take this supplement in addition to starting baby on their own vitamin D supplement as very little vitamin D passes to a baby in breastmilk.

Women and children who qualify for the Healthy Start scheme can get free vitamin supplements containing vitamin D.

Some groups of people will not get enough vitamin D because they have little or no exposure to sunlight. People are advised to take 10 micrograms of a vitamin D supplement throughout the year if they:

- Are not often outdoors, e.g. the frail or housebound
- Are cared for in an institution e.g. care home
- Wear clothes that cover up most of their skin when outdoors

People from ethnic minority groups with dark skin, e.g. people of African, African-Caribbean or South Asian origin may not get enough vitamin D as a result of skin exposure to sunlight and are advised to consider taking a daily 10 microgram vitamin D supplement throughout the year.

References:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vitamins-minerals/Pages/Vitamin-D.aspx> accessed on 1/3/2017

<http://3531d710iigr2n4po7k4kgvv-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/babyfriendly/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/01/Vitamin-D-supplementation-for-breastfed-babies-Unicef-UK-Statement.pdf> accessed on 1/3/2017