

Vitamin D supplementation for all women & babies

During Pregnancy:

All women are advised to take a small dose of Vitamin D daily, in addition to any other pregnancy vitamins:

- ☉ Women at lower risk for Vitamin D deficiency (regular sunshine, fair skinned, not overweight) should take **1000 international units daily**.
- ☉ Women at higher risk for Vitamin D deficiency (don't get much sunshine, dark skin, overweight) should take:
 - * **2000 international units per day for 8 weeks then**
 - * **1000 international units per day for the rest of the pregnancy**

While Breastfeeding:

- ☉ Women at lower risk for Vitamin D deficiency – can **stop** the Vitamin D supplement
- ☉ Women at higher risk for Vitamin D deficiency – should continue with **1000 international units** daily and may need to take it in the long term (please consult with your doctor)

Babies for First 12 months

- ☉ All babies should receive **400 international units** daily for the first year of life. Some may need to continue throughout childhood. (consult your doctor)
- ☉ When giving your baby Vitamin D, the dropper needs to be directed to either side of the baby's mouth and not directly to the back of the mouth.

When giving your baby Vitamin D, the dropper needs to be directed to either side of the baby's mouth and not directly to the back of the mouth.

Diet

Vitamin D isn't present in many foods - the best sources are listed below. You should try and have some of these in your diet:

- Fatty fish
e.g. salmon, tuna, and mackerel
- Fish oils - these are among the best sources.
- Beef liver, cheese and egg yolks - contain some Vitamin D
- All margarines and some milk products have added Vitamin D.

For Vitamin D to work well in keeping your bones and teeth strong, you also need to eat foods that contain calcium (dairy foods and tinned salmon are great for this). Most people get plenty in their diet but if you are vegan or don't eat dairy foods, you may need a calcium supplement.

Vitamin D supplements for infants



WSP055 Vitamin D for pregnant women V9 Dec 2022

Vitamin D

information
for
Pregnant
Women,
Mothers
&
Babies

Why is Vitamin D important?

- ⊗ Vitamin D is needed to help us absorb calcium from food to keep our bones and teeth strong.
- ⊗ Without enough Vitamin D, children and adults can develop weak bones; in children the bones may even bend out of shape.
- ⊗ Other health problems can also occur.

What's the best way to make sure my family & I get enough Vitamin D?

The key things for you and your family are:

- ⊗ To be aware Vitamin D is important, not just in pregnancy and infancy, but throughout all of life
- ⊗ To know that 90% of the Vitamin D in our bodies is made in our own skin under the action of sunlight; only a small amount comes from food (eggs, oily fish, margarine, some milk products if they have added Vitamin D).
- ⊗ If you don't get much sunshine on your skin or if you have dark skin (the melanin pigment reduces the ability of the sun to make Vitamin D), you are at increased risk of having low levels. Being overweight also reduces Vitamin D. Research shows that at least 50% of pregnant women in Western Sydney are low in Vitamin D.
- ⊗ It is important for all of us, if possible, to get a sensible, safe amount of sunshine regularly. For example, it's good for children to play outside before and after school/pre-school.
- ⊗ To give your baby the best start, we advise you to take a small daily dose of Vitamin D during pregnancy and then give your baby a small daily dose until the age of 12 months. Some children may need to keep taking Vitamin D after that age.

Do I need to have a blood test?

Most people, including pregnant women and babies, do not need a blood test. Vitamin D blood levels go up and down, being higher in summer and lower in winter. Because of Vitamin D's importance throughout life, it generally makes more sense to follow the recommendations given in this pamphlet rather than having repeated blood tests.

We recommend that all pregnant women and all babies up to 12 months old receive a dose of Vitamin D every day.

Pregnant women should also try to get some sunshine on their skin regularly, but not from behind glass. For both adults and children, it is important to avoid sunburn.

Infant feeding and Vitamin D

Breast milk is the best food for your baby, being perfectly balanced for nutrition and also containing substances that reduce infection in your baby. However, like most foods, breast milk doesn't contain much Vitamin D.

Infant formula has some added Vitamin D. However, once your baby starts to eat family foods at around 6 months old and therefore drink less formula, she/he may not receive enough Vitamin D.

It is recommended that all babies up to 12 months old should be given a small dose (400 international units) of Vitamin D every day to make sure they get enough. Some children may need to continue this even after 12 months.

Safe sun exposure for adults

All adults, including pregnant women, should try to get some direct sunshine (not from behind glass) on their arms or legs (about 15% of the body surface) on most days. This will make about 1000 international units of Vitamin D (this varies between climates).

During summer for adults:

- ⊗ the best time is before 10am or after 3pm
- ⊗ fair-skinned women - 7 minutes; wear sunscreen, hat, sunglasses but have bare arms or legs
- ⊗ dark-skinned women - 30 minutes; hat/sunglasses recommended but can have short periods without sunscreen unless near highly-reflective surfaces such as water or snow

During winter for adults:

- ⊗ the best time is the middle of the day
- ⊗ fair-skinned women - 20 minutes; wear sunscreen, hat, sunglasses but have bare arms or legs
- ⊗ Dark-skinned women - 60 minutes; sun-protection not usually needed unless near highly reflective surfaces such as water or snow

Safe sun exposure for babies

No one knows how much sunshine is ideal for babies, but a few minutes each day is thought to be a good idea. Older children should be encouraged to play outside before and after preschool and school.

During summer for infants / children:

- ⊗ fair-skinned baby/child: avoid sunburn; full sun protection - sunscreen, hat, clothing, shade and sunglasses - is recommended
- ⊗ dark-skinned baby / child: avoid sunburn; intermittent sun exposure without sunscreen can be tolerated, but hat and sunglasses still recommended

During winter for infants / children:

- ⊗ fair-skinned baby / child: use sun protection especially if outside for long periods or if near water or snow
- ⊗ dark-skinned baby / child: sunscreen usually not needed in southern Australian states