

Vitamin D

This leaflet is for all pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.

Introduction

The current UK advice recommends Vitamin D supplementation to all individuals, especially mothers who are of Black, Asian and minority backgrounds. Vitamin D is extremely important for keeping teeth and bones healthy, helping our nerves and muscles to work properly and maintaining a healthy immune system.



Why is Vitamin D important?

A lack of vitamin D can lead to bone deformities such as [rickets](#) in children, and bone pain caused by a condition called [osteomalacia](#) in adults.

Vitamin D deficiency is also associated with Acute Respiratory Distress (ARDS).

All pregnant and breastfeeding mothers are advised to take a daily dose of 10 micrograms (400IU) of vitamin D3.

How do we get Vitamin D?

Most of the vitamin D our body needs is made by the action of sunlight on the skin. Very little is available through the diet as only some foods contain vitamin D and these would need to be eaten in large quantities to meet daily requirements.

If you are able to, spend 15-20 minutes in the sunlight between 11am -3pm, without sunscreen and with some skin exposed, daily. Those with darker skin may need a little more time in the sun. It is important to not let the skin redden or burn

Through the diet as only some foods contain vitamin D and these would need to be eaten in large quantities to meet daily requirements: oily fish (i.e. mackerel, sardines, pilchards, trout, salmon, herrings, kippers, eel and whitebait), eggs, fortified breakfast cereals, mushrooms, evaporated milk, dried milk powder and fortified margarine.

Who might have low levels of Vitamin D?

Some groups of people who:

- Are not often outdoors, such as those who are frail or housebound
- Usually wear clothes that cover up most of their skin when outdoors.
- Are from minority ethnic groups with dark skin, such as those of African, African-Caribbean or South Asian origin, might not get enough vitamin D from sunlight
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding to ensure optimum bone health during this important time
- Are vegans and those who do not eat fish or generally have a poor diet



Compassionate

Aspirational

Resourceful

Excellent

- Are obese (BMI>30kg/m²) or have had a gastric bypass
- Have malabsorption syndromes or taking certain drugs (antiresorptives, anticonvulsants, rifampicin)
- Have a family history of vitamin D deficiency

Where can I get Vitamin D?



In Reading, Healthy Start vitamins for women (containing folic acid, vitamin C and vitamin D) are given free to all pregnant women. For more information, speak to your midwife or visit:

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthy-start-vouchers/healthy-start-vitamins/>

Your GP will prescribe a dose of vitamin D only if you are Vitamin D deficient. After this you should purchase your own vitamin D supplements to take daily.

Clinicians should be aware of this increased risk, and have a lower threshold to review, admit and consider multidisciplinary escalation of symptoms.

Where can I get more information?

If you need any further information, please speak with your midwife or visit:

- Your local pharmacist
- NHS Website – www.nhs.uk
- Patient UK – www.patient.co.uk



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References

- Statement on Vitamin D supplementation for Breastfed Babies UNICEF Jan 2017
- Vitamin D: supplement use in specific population groups –Nov 2014 and reviewed Aug 2017
- NHS Website: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/vitamins-for-children.aspx>

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Aneta Hlophe, Senior Midwife, 13 April 2021

Next review due: May 2023