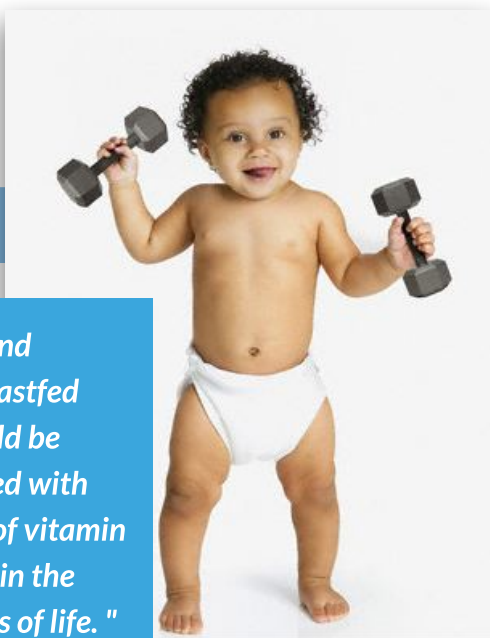


If vitamin D can be obtained from sunlight, should I spend more time outdoors with my baby?

Babies skin is delicate and sensitive to UVB rays.⁵ The American Pediatric Association (AAP) recommends that “babies younger than six months of age avoid direct sun exposure to reduce their risk of future skin cancer.”⁵

What about supplements?

To ensure adequate vitamin D status, exclusively breastfed babies should receive supplementation with vitamin D-only oral preparations. These supplements are widely available, cost-effective, and are easily administered in the form of drops.⁴ If followed accordingly, these preparations have minimal risk for toxicity.⁴



"Breastfed and partially breastfed infants should be supplemented with 400 IU/day of vitamin D beginning in the first few days of life."

-The American Pediatric Association

5

How much vitamin D should my baby get?

The AAP recommends that all babies, but particularly those that are exclusively breastfed, receive an adequate intake of 400 IU/day of vitamin D beginning shortly after birth.⁴ This recommendation is sufficient for the prevention of rickets and other deficiency-related symptoms.⁴ Supplementation should be continued unless the child is weaned to have one liter per day of vitamin D fortified milk or infant formula.⁴

For questions or support regarding your baby and their vitamin D status, please contact your pediatrician, a dietitian or your local WIC office.



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VITAMIN D & YOUR EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFED BABY



WHY VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT FOR YOUR BABY'S HEALTH

Breastfeeding and vitamin D:

Breastfeeding is a great way to ensure that babies have a healthy head start to their lives! For optimal growth and development, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that “babies be breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life,” and then with complementary foods until the age of two or until both the mother and baby are ready to wean.¹

Although breast milk adequately meets most infant's nutritional needs, amounts of Vitamin D may not be sufficient to sustain proper health; this may be especially true if a mother had low vitamin D status during her pregnancy.² For proper bone health and prevention of serious conditions such as rickets, babies should receive adequate supplementation after birth and throughout childhood.³

1 Vitamin D Basics:

Vitamin D3, or cholecalciferol, can be obtained either from diet or from direct exposure to UVB rays from sunlight. Although the vitamin is present in various foods, poor diet along with limited sun exposure may contribute to low vitamin D status among many babies. Receiving adequate sun exposure may be particularly challenging for those who live in colder regions, spend most of their time indoors, or wear SPF or clothing that covers their skin while outdoors.⁴

2 Why are breastfed babies at risk?

Unfortunately, it is estimated that only 5-19% of exclusively breastfed babies in the United States meet recommendations for vitamin D.⁵ This is due to the fact that breast milk is naturally low in the vitamin.³ Babies who are especially at risk include those who:

- are exclusively breastfed⁶
- are partially breastfed, or consume less than of formula with vitamin D⁶
- have darker skin tones³
- do not receive sufficient, daily sun exposure³
- have a mother who had a vitamin D deficiency during pregnancy²



3 What risks are associated with a vitamin D deficiency?

Babies with low vitamin D levels are at heightened risk of developing rickets, a condition characterized by bowed legs, growth retardation, and soft skull bones due to poor bone mineralization.² Babies who are exclusively breastfed and have minimal sun exposure are also at risk of:

- hypocalcaemia or low calcium levels in the blood²
- suppressed immune response²
- lower respiratory tract infections³
- juvenile or type I diabetes⁵

4 Ensuring baby has adequate vitamin D intake:

Can I take more vitamin D and pass it to my baby through breast milk?

Although some research suggests that mothers with a vitamin D intake between 4000 and 6400 IU/day are able to meet both their own and their babies vitamin D needs, there is no medical consensus regarding these figures.³ Mothers are advised to consult with their physicians before deciding to increase their vitamin D intake.