

Vitamin D, sometimes referred to as “the sunshine vitamin,” has long been recognized in helping build strong bones and preventing rickets, a softening or weakening of bones in children. New research is suggesting Vitamin D may have other important roles in heart health, regulating the immune system, and even in cancer prevention. Unfortunately, many adults and children often have low levels of Vitamin D and must rely on supplements to achieve the appropriate amounts of Vitamin D on a regular basis.

WHAT ARE SOURCES OF VITAMIN D?

Our skin makes Vitamin D when exposed to sunlight. Factors such as the amount of pigment in your baby’s skin and exposure affect how much Vitamin D is produced by your body from sunlight. In winter months, northern parts of the country (such as the Bay Area) may not receive enough sunlight to support the Vitamin D needs for any infant. Additionally, exposing skin to sunlight has been shown to increase the risk of skin cancer later in life and we now recommend that infants and young children not be in direct sunlight when they are outside—particularly infants younger than 6 months of age. As a rule, sunscreen should always be used on all children when exposed to the sun, but this prevents the formation of Vitamin D in the skin.

Milk is also a good source of vitamin D in our diets, but we would need to drink at least one quart (32 ounces) per day to get enough. This is why we recommend Vitamin D supplements for babies and young children.

WHO NEEDS VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTS?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all infants who are exclusively breastfed or drink less than 32 ounces of supplemental formula per day receive daily Vitamin D supplements of 400 IU. Children one year of age or older should also receive 400 IU of Vitamin D per day. Infants who are exclusively formula fed do not need Vitamin D supplements.

HOW DO I GIVE VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENTS TO MY INFANT OR CHILD?

There are a number of over-the-counter Vitamin D supplements available at your local pharmacy or health food store.

Enfamil Tri-vi-sol or Poly-vi-sol are liquid multivitamins for infants and young children. You may also be able to find liquid drops that only contain Vitamin D. For all three of these products, **one dropperful per day** given by mouth provides the recommended dosage of 400 IU of vitamin D.

Carlson’s Baby D drops, available at Whole Foods and other health food stores, provide 400 IU of vitamin D in only **one drop** given directly into the baby’s mouth, or dropped onto a pacifier or nipple just before feeding.

Most children’s multivitamins (gummy or chewable) contain 400 IU of Vitamin D. These can be given to children two years and older, according to the package instructions.

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Contact your pediatrician’s office for more information
or to schedule an appointment, **650.498.6500**

About Vitamin D for Infants

As with any medication or vitamin supplement, please read all packaging information and follow instructions.

For more information about whether Vitamin D is right for you and your children, please talk directly with your healthcare provider.

Sources: "Vitamin D and your baby," www.healthychildren.org, 2/27/12; "Vitamin D Supplementation for Infants," www.aap.org, 4/17/12; "Adherence to Vitamin D Recommendations among US Infant," *Pediatrics*, Vol 125, No. 4, 2010

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