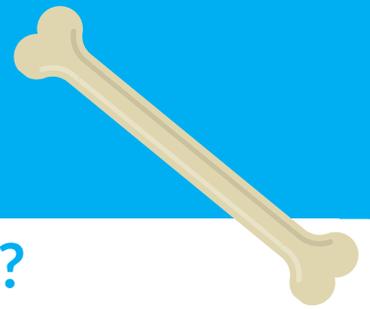


# VITAMIN D SUPPORT SHEET



## Why do we need vitamin D?

Vitamin D is important to keep bones and teeth healthy. Vitamin D can also influence our health in many other ways. If we do not have enough vitamin D it can start to effect our heart, muscles, brain and even our lungs.



## Sources of vitamin D

There are not many foods that naturally contain vitamin D. Oily fish contain vitamin D but there are limits on how often some groups of people can eat these.

Check out the NHS Choices website for more information.

Some foods have vitamin D added in during processing such as margarine, breakfast cereals, yogurt and certain infant formulas and toddler milks.

Parents are not advised to rely on toddler milks to provide their child with vitamin D.

Cows milk in the UK is not fortified with vitamin D and is not a good source of vitamin D in a child or adult's diet.

Direct sunlight on the skin is our main source of Vitamin D from late March/early April to September and for this reason it is often referred to as the 'sunshine vitamin'.

## Factors affecting vitamin D production

Many things can effect how much vitamin D our bodies make such as the time of the year or day, the weather, the clothes we wear and where we live.

For this reason there is no recommendation about how much time is needed in the sun to make enough vitamin D to meet the body's requirements. Remember that you should not stay in direct sunlight long enough to burn.

Children under 6 months of age should be kept out of direct strong sunlight.



## Vitamin D supplements

Breastfed babies from birth to one year of age should be given a daily vitamin D supplement of 8.5-10 micrograms. Babies fed infant formula should not be given a vitamin D supplement until they are receiving less than 500ml/17oz (about a pint) of infant formula a day. Parents can speak to their GP, Pharmacist or HV to discuss.

Children aged 1 to 4 years old should be given a daily vitamin D supplement of 10 micrograms. Everyone over the age of five should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D from October to March.

The following groups should take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms vitamin D throughout the year:

- People who are seldom outdoors such as frail or housebound individuals and those who are confined indoors e.g. in institutions such as care homes
- People who habitually wear clothes that cover most of their skin while outdoors.
- People from minority ethnic groups with dark skin such as those of African, African-Caribbean and South Asian origin

All pregnant and breastfeeding women should take a vitamin D supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D. Your pharmacist will be able to advise you on suitable choices.

## Healthy Start Scheme and other supplements

Healthy Start is a means-tested scheme which provides pregnant women and or women with children under four years old with vouchers to spend on basic foods including: fruit and vegetables, milk and infant formula.

The scheme also provides free vitamin vouchers for eligible women and children.

Healthy Start vitamin drops for children contain vitamin A, C and D.

Families will need to fill out the Healthy Start application form, get it stamped by their midwife or Health Visitor and send it off in the free post envelope.

For information on where vouchers can be redeemed, please see this link: <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>

If families are not eligible for Healthy Start they can purchase Abidec or Dalivit vitamin drops from most pharmacies and large supermarkets. Families should be advised to read the packaging for guidance on how many drops are needed and how these can be given to children





## Why do we need calcium?

Calcium is important for strong bones and teeth.

If we do not get enough calcium it can cause adults to have brittle bones & pain and children can have bowed legs.

## Sources of calcium

We can get calcium from foods such as cheese, milk, yoghurt, green leafy vegetables, soya beans, and foods that have calcium added such as bread.

## Milk

When choosing a milk, you should only offer children under 1 year breastmilk or infant formula.

If your child is 1 -2 years, they can drink whole/full fat cows milk.

If your child is above the age of 2 years and they are eating and growing well, they can drink semi skimmed milk.

If your child is under they age of 5 years, you should not give them skimmed milk to drink.



## Allergies

If you think your child has an allergy you should speak to your GP.



## Why do we need iron?



Iron is important for healthy blood, our brain and for fighting infections.

We need to eat iron rich foods two to three times a day.

Those who are vegetarian or vegan should aim to have these foods three times each day.

## Sources of iron

We can get iron from red meat, chicken, turkey, and fish.

We can also get iron from vegetarian foods such as chickpeas, beans, lentils, eggs, breakfast cereals (which have added iron), and tofu.

Liver is also high in iron BUT you should avoid liver if you are pregnant and limit to once per week if you are breastfeeding. Infants under 6 months should not be offered liver. Infants over 6 months should only be offered a small amount no more than once a week.

Nuts does contain iron HOWEVER do not give whole nuts to children under five years, as they can cause choking. You could offer ground nuts or nut butters instead.

## Factors influencing absorption

When we eat, our body breaks this food down and takes up some of the iron.

We take up more iron from foods like meat or fish, than we do from vegetables or cereals.

Having fruits or vegetables with our meal can help us to take up more iron.

Having tea, coffee or bran with a meal cuts down on the amount of iron we take up. Try to avoid having these foods/drinks for an hour either side of your meal.

