



# Vitamin D for breastfeeding women and children under 3 years old

This booklet gives you information on vitamin D, whether you and your child or children are recommended to take a supplement and where you can get them.



## Recommendations for vitamin D supplementation

The national recommendations for vitamin D supplementation for breastfeeding women, babies and young children are:

- All pregnant and breastfeeding women should take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D
- Breastfed babies from birth to 1 year of age should be given a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10 micrograms of vitamin D
- Formula-fed babies should not be given a vitamin D supplement until they are having less than 500ml (about a pint) of infant formula a day, as infant formula contains added vitamin D
- All children aged 1 to 4 years old should be given a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D



## Who can receive FREE Vitamin D supplements?

All breastfeeding women and children under three years old in Greater Glasgow and Clyde can now get free vitamin D supplements. This is a new Scottish Government scheme which has replaced Healthy Start children's vitamins.

- **Breastfeeding women and breastfed babies** will be given the first pot of vitamin D tablets (for women) and drops (for baby) on the maternity ward before going home. This provides a four months' supply and following this further supplies can be collected free from your local community pharmacy.

- Vitamin D drops for **all children under three years old** are available free at all community pharmacies.

Formula fed babies should not be given a vitamin D supplement until they are having less than 500ml (about a pint) of infant formula every day. This is because infant formula contains added vitamin D.

## Why vitamin D supplements are recommended

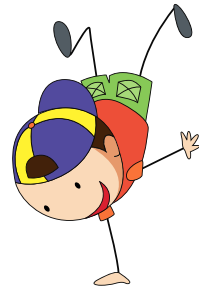
Vitamin D is particularly important for pregnant women, babies and young children for growing bones and muscle health.

Without enough vitamin D:

- Children can be at risk of muscle weakness and bone softening that can lead to rickets, which causes weak and badly formed bones
- The mother can be at risk of muscle weakness and osteomalacia, which leads to bone pain and tenderness

Our main source of vitamin D is sunlight. In Scotland, we only get enough of the right kind of sunlight for our bodies to make vitamin D between April and September, mostly between 11 am and 3 pm. This means some people are unlikely to get enough from sunlight. This is supported by studies that have found a proportion of us living in the UK have low vitamin D levels.

A baby's vitamin D level will depend on their mothers levels during pregnancy so it would be higher if the mother took vitamin D during pregnancy. If you are not exposed to much sunlight you are at greater risk. For example, if women cover their skin for cultural reasons or they have darker skin, they will need to spend longer in the sun to produce enough vitamin D.



It is recommended that breastfed babies take a vitamin D supplement from birth as a precaution. Infant formula milk contains added vitamin D and that is why a vitamin D supplement is not recommended if your baby is having more than 500ml (around 1 pint) every day. When your baby starts having less than 500ml infant formula every day, then they can start taking a vitamin D supplement.

## About the vitamin D supplements

There are two vitamin D products, vitamin D tablets for breastfeeding women and vitamin D drops suitable for children from birth.

Both products contain the recommended amounts of 10 micrograms of vitamin D3 with each pot providing a 4 month supply.

### The vitamin D tablets are:

- Sugar free
- Free from artificial flavours, nuts, wheat, gelatine and eggs
- Suitable for those following a vegan, vegetarian, halal or kosher diet



### The vitamin D drop for children are:

- Sugar free
- Free from gluten, yeast, lactose, artificial flavouring, colouring and preservatives
- Suitable for those following a vegan, vegetarian, halal or kosher diet

## Common questions

**I am pregnant, can I have the vitamin D product if it is recommended?**

Pregnant women are provided Healthy Start vitamins at antenatal appointments for the duration of pregnancy. Healthy Start vitamins contain the right amount of vitamin D (10 micrograms) along with folic acid and vitamin C. Therefore, you do not need to take the vitamin D supplement and should not take both the vitamin D and Healthy Start vitamins at the same time.

**My child is 3 years old, can I get the free vitamin D drops?**

It is recommended that all children aged 1 to 4 years old take a daily vitamin D supplement. This current Scottish Government scheme supports free vitamin D for all children under 3 year olds. Although you will not be able to receive free vitamin D, you will be able to purchase it at your community pharmacy. Vitamin D products are available at most supermarkets and pharmacies. Look for a supplement containing 10 micrograms vitamin D that is sugar free.



**Why do breastfed babies need vitamin D supplementation and not formula fed babies?**

Both breastfed and formula fed babies need vitamin D. This is because we get most vitamin D from sunlight and in Scotland we are unlikely to get enough.

Infant formula is strictly regulated in the UK and must contain vitamin D. Therefore supplementation is not needed as it already contains added vitamin D. It is recommended that breastfed babies are given vitamin D from birth as a precaution to ensure they get enough. Breast milk gives babies the best start in life providing long lasting health benefits for mother and baby.

## My baby is mixed feeding breast milk and infant formula, should I give them vitamin D?

Mixed fed babies can be given a vitamin D supplement if they are having less than 500 ml (around 1 pint) infant formula. You will be able to collect them free from your local community pharmacy. If they are having more than 500 ml infant formula every day, a vitamin D supplement is not needed.

### More information

If you are still unsure if you or your child should take vitamin D speak to your midwife, health visitor or community pharmacist for more information.

Visit: NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde website  
<https://www.nhsggc.scot/vitamind>

### Ready Steady Baby! Your guide to:

- pregnancy
- labour and birth
- early parenthood

Visit: [www.nhsinform.scot/readysteadybaby](http://www.nhsinform.scot/readysteadybaby)

### For parenting hints, tips and tricks

Visit: [www.parentclub.scot/](http://www.parentclub.scot/)

You might be entitled to **Best Start Foods**, a prepaid card that you can use to buy healthy foods for children under 3 years.

Visit: [www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods](http://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods)





