

**NHSGGC Briefing paper:  
Free vitamin D for all breastfeeding women and children under 3 years old  
(updated May 2022)**

**1. Purpose**

This briefing paper complements [The Scottish Governments Vitamin D Scheme policy brief](#). It provides additional information on how the vitamins will be distributed and practical support for midwives, children and families teams and community pharmacists in NHSGGC.

**2. New Vitamin D scheme in Scotland**

The Scottish Government is enhancing the current vitamin scheme to provide free vitamin D universally for all children under 3 and to breastfeeding women as part of the Government's Programme for Scotland 2019-2020. This replaces the Healthy Start vitamin scheme for children.

NHSGGC will implement the full vitamin provision for all children under 3 years instead of taking a three year phased approach as outlined in The Scottish Government policy brief.

**3. Current vitamin D recommendations**

The current recommendations based on CMO advice and the recommendations from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) for vitamin D for pregnant and breastfeeding women and babies and young children are:

- a. All pregnant and breastfeeding women take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D.
- b. Breastfed babies from birth to 1 year of age should be given a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10 micrograms of vitamin D to make sure they get enough.
- c. 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 is fortified with vitamin D.
- d. All children aged 1 to 4 years old should be given a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D.

#### 4. Key points on the new vitamin D scheme

Vitamin provision is changing for breastfeeding women and children in NHSGGC. The key points are:

- a. All pregnant women will continue to receive free Healthy Start women's vitamins, containing vitamin D throughout pregnancy provided at antenatal appointments. This provision is not changing.
- b. All breastfeeding women will now receive free vitamin D tablets from birth and for the duration of breastfeeding, containing 10 micrograms vitamin D.
- c. All breastfed and mixed fed babies (if having less than 500ml infant formula a day) will now receive free vitamin D drops from birth.
- d. All children under 3 years old are entitled to free vitamin D drops. Formula fed babies should not be given the vitamin D drops until they are having less than 500ml (around 1 pint) infant formula every day as it is already fortified with vitamin D.
- e. The new Scottish vitamin D scheme is only for children under 3 years old. The Vitamin D recommendation is for all children under 5 years old (see 3.d Current recommendations), therefore for children aged 3 and 4 years old, vitamin D can be purchased in most supermarkets and pharmacies. The vitamin D drops for children will also be available to purchase in community pharmacies for children over 3 years old.
- f. The new scheme came into effect in NHSGGC from **1<sup>st</sup> July 2021** where the vitamins will be provided at maternity wards before discharge and available in all community pharmacies (see 5: Distribution).
- g. Below shows the two new products; vitamin D drops for children and vitamin D tablet for breastfeeding women.



## 5. Distribution in NHSGGC

All community pharmacies in NHSGGC will stock the vitamin D for breastfeeding women and vitamin D drops for children. The parent/carer should just need to ask at the counter. In addition, maternity wards will provide all breastfeeding women (tablets) and breastfed babies (drops) the first pots of vitamin D before discharge.

## 6. Guidance for midwives

The following provides specific information and guidance for midwives:

- e. **Community midwives** continue to provide all pregnant women Healthy Start women's vitamins from booking and throughout pregnancy.
  
- f. **Maternity ward midwives:**
  - Provide one pot (120 servings) of vitamin D tablets to all breastfeeding women and advise to continue taking vitamin D for the duration of breastfeeding.
  - Provide one pot (120 servings) of the vitamin D drops to all breastfed or mixed fed (if they are having less than 500ml infant formula a day) babies.
  - Advise that if required, further vitamin D can be collected at all community pharmacies in NHSGGC by asking at the pharmacy counter.
  - Provide a 'Vitamin D for breastfeeding women and children under 3 years old' information booklet (see 8: Resources) for parent/carer if required for information.
  - Inform parents that vitamin D is only required if the baby is having less than 500ml infant formula per day as infant formula is fortified with vitamin D. If a mother chooses to stop breastfeeding and move to infant formula (more than 500ml) then the vitamin D supplement should stop.
  
- c. **Ordering vitamin D products**

To order the vitamins for distribution on the maternity ward please follow the [Standard Operating Procedure](#). For any help in ordering the vitamins contact the Pharmacy Health Improvement Team [pharmacyhit@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:pharmacyhit@ggc.scot.nhs.uk).

## **7. Guidance for Children and Families teams**

The Scottish Government vitamin D scheme has replaced the Healthy Start children's vitamins. Therefore on visits Health Visitors and Family nurse partnership staff should check parents are aware of the guidance around Vitamin D as below, and are aware of where to access future supplies.

- Breastfeeding mothers of the vitamin D recommendations for breastfeeding women and breastfed infants to take a daily vitamin D supplement (see section 3).
- Formula fed babies do not need to take vitamin D until they are having less than 500ml a day (around 1 pint) as infant formula contains vitamin D. When the amount of formula reduces to less than 500ml (around 1 pint) everyday then vitamin D can be introduced. This message should be used on visits when introducing solids is discussed so parents and carers are aware Vitamin D can be introduced when their child is having less than 500ml formula a day.
- If the baby is mixed fed and they are having less than 500ml infant formula a day, then they can be given the vitamin D drops.
- If women choose to stop breastfeeding and move to infant formula, vitamin D drops are only advised if the baby is having less than 500ml formula every day.
- All women and children recommended to take vitamin D (section 4) can collect them free of charge at all community pharmacies in NHSGGC by asking at the pharmacy counter. Please note that children aged 3 and 4 years old are not entitled under the Scottish scheme to free vitamin D, but it is still a national recommendation. Vitamin D suitable for children is available in most pharmacies and supermarkets. The vitamin D drops will be available to purchase in community pharmacies for children over 3 years old.
- An information booklet and postcard 'Vitamin D for breastfeeding women and children under 3 years old' will be available for parents and carers (See 8: Resources).

## 8. Resources

Resources have been developed to support clear and consistent messaging for families.

**Information booklet**  
(PHRD code: B00370)



**key messages postcard**  
(PRHD code: C00056)



**Poster (wipeable)**  
(PHRD code: P00176)



- The resources are available to order from the [Public Health Resource Directory](#).
- The resources have been translated into [10 alternative languages](#).
- A [webpage](#) has been developed on the NHSGGC website for both health professionals and the public to host information, provide updates, further details, frequently asked questions and resources.
- Promotional materials will be displayed in community pharmacies including [window stickers](#) and [wobblers](#).
- National promotional poster.
- Public Health Scotland '[Vitamin D and you](#)' leaflet is still available to order from the Public Health Resource Directory that contains more general population wide vitamin D information.

## 9. Contact

For any queries on

- Community Pharmacy distribution.
- The ordering of vitamin D supplement via PECOS for maternity wards.

Please contact the Pharmacy Health Improvement Team at [pharmacyhit@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:pharmacyhit@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

For any queries on the vitamin D guidance, contact Sarah Morrison, Health Improvement Senior at [Sarah.Morrison@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Sarah.Morrison@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

## 10. References

CMO (2017) New Recommendations on Vitamin D Supplementation  
<http://www.communitypharmacyscotland.org.uk/media/1987/cmo-unnumbered-letter-issued-on-24-november-2017-final-new-recomme.pdf>

SACN (2016) Vitamin D and health report  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sacn-vitamin-d-and-health-report>

SACN (2018) Feeding in the first Year of Life  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/725530/SACN\\_report\\_on\\_Feeding\\_in\\_the\\_First\\_Year\\_of\\_Life.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/725530/SACN_report_on_Feeding_in_the_First_Year_of_Life.pdf)

Scottish Government (2019) Protecting Scotland's Future: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2019-2020 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/protecting-scotlands-future-governments-programme-scotland-2019-20/>