

Where can I get vitamin D supplements?

Vitamin D supplements can be bought from most pharmacies and supermarkets. If you are unsure which supplement to choose, ask your local pharmacist, GP, midwife or health visitor.

NB. If you or your child are already taking any vitamin supplements check with a health professional before you start taking any additional supplements.

Am I eligible for FREE Vitamin D Supplements?

HEALTHY
START

Some pregnant women and families that have a child under 4 may be entitled to free vitamin supplements through the Healthy Start scheme.



If you receive Healthy Start vitamin vouchers they can be exchanged for free vitamin supplements at various health centres in Redbridge.

To find out more speak to your local Children's Centre or Child Health Clinic, or visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk

For more information about Vitamin D please see: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-minerals/pages/vitamin-d.aspx>

Vitamin D Deficiency

It is often difficult to see vitamin D deficiency as many people do not show any obvious symptoms.

In severe cases, symptoms of vitamin D deficiency may include:

- Aches and pains in muscles and bones
- Muscle weakness
- Poor growth
- Delayed walking
- Muscle cramps or spasms
- Bow legs or knock knees
- It can also lead to seizures and a weakening of the heart muscle.

Can you have too much vitamin D?

People who take supplements are advised not to take more than 100µg (100 micrograms/4000IU) of vitamin D a day as it could be harmful. This applies to adults, including pregnant and breastfeeding women and the elderly, and children aged 11-17 years.

Children aged 1-10 years should not have more than 50µg (50 micrograms/2000IU) a day. Babies under 12 months should not have more than 25µg (25 micrograms a day/1000IU).

Some people have medical conditions that mean they may not be able to take as much vitamin D safely. If in doubt, you should talk to your doctor.

If your doctor has recommended you take a different amount of vitamin D, you should follow their advice.



NELFT NHS

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Best care by the best people

Vitamin D: Are you getting enough?

Important information for pregnant women and parents/carers



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Why do we need vitamin D?

Vitamin D plays an important role in keeping bones and teeth strong and healthy.

Not getting enough vitamin D can lead to bone and muscle weakness in both adults and children. In turn, it can also lead on to rickets (a bending of the bones) in children and osteomalacia, bone pain and tenderness, in adults.

Where does vitamin D come from?



Sunshine

We convert sunshine into vitamin D in the skin, however we can only do this during the summer months in the UK.

Recent research has shown that not everyone will be able to get all the vitamin D they need during the summer.

It is important to remember to stay safe in the sun and prevent sun burn. For tips on staying safe in the sun search 'sun safety' on the internet page: www.nhs.uk



Food

Some vitamin D can be found in foods such as oily fish* (e.g. salmon, mackerel, sardines and trout), fortified breakfast cereals and eggs. It is difficult however, to get enough vitamin D from food alone.

**NB. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should have no more than 2 portions of oily fish a week.*

Who needs Vitamin D? In July 2016 guidance from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) recommends the following:

All babies from birth to 1 year (not including those drinking 500 mls / 17 oz or more of formula milk per 24 hours)	8.5—10µg (microgram) Vitamin D
All aged 1 year and above, including ALL adults (includes pregnant and breastfeeding women, elderly and those at risk of Vitamin D deficiency)	10µg Vitamin D

Do children need other vitamins?

All babies aged 6 months plus are recommended to take a supplement containing vitamin A, C and D (unless they are having 500ml of infant formula or more-). Breast milk should continue to be given when babies are introduced to solid foods at 6 months.

All children between 1-5 years are recommended to take a supplement containing vitamins A, C, and D. Multivitamin supplements containing vitamins A, C and D can therefore be taken instead of a single vitamin D supplement, but make sure that it contains:

- 8.5µg –10µg (340 IU—400IU) vitamin D if child is under 1 year of age
- 10µg (400IU) vitamin D if child is 1 year or over (including adults).

All pregnant and breastfeeding women should take **10µg (400IU)** of vitamin D daily.



There are many additional benefits of breastfeeding including protection of babies and children from illnesses and infections and reducing risk of breast cancer in mothers.

For details about healthy eating during pregnancy and breastfeeding including information on supplements see www.nhs.uk

Vitamin D supplementation is particularly important for those most at risk including:

- People whose skin has little or no exposure to the sun, like those in care homes, or people who cover their skin when they are outside.
- People with dark skin, from African, African-Caribbean and South Asian backgrounds.
- People who are very overweight

The amount of vitamin D contained in supplements is sometimes expressed in international units (IU). 10µg (10 micrograms) = 400 IU.