



# Vitamin D for those who are breastfeeding and children under 3 years old

This booklet gives you information on vitamin D. Recommendations on vitamin D supplement for you and your child(ren) and where you can get them.



## Recommendations for vitamin D supplementation

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

- Those who are pregnant and breastfeeding should take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D
- All babies and children under the age of 5 should be given a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D
- Mixed-fed babies should be given a vitamin D supplement if they have less than 500 ml (around 1 pint) of infant formula in a day.
- 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



## Who can receive FREE Vitamin D supplements?

All those who are breastfeeding and children under 3 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.

- **Those who are breastfeeding and breastfed babies** will be given the first bottle of vitamin D tablets (for those who are breastfeeding) and drops (for baby) on the maternity ward before going home. This provides a 4 months' supply and following this further supplies can be collected free from your local community pharmacy.

- Vitamin D drops for **all children under 3 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 should happen when the baby reaches 10-12 months. This is because infant formula contains added vitamin D.

## Why vitamin D supplements are recommended

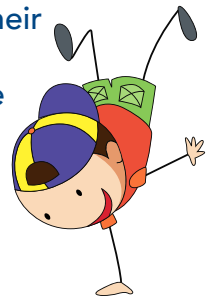
Vitamin D is particularly important for those who are pregnant, babies and young children for growing bones and muscle health.

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 adult 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 levels during pregnancy so they would be higher if a vitamin D supplement was taken during pregnancy. If you are not exposed to much sunlight you are at greater risk. For example, those who cover their skin for religious or cultural reasons or have darker skin 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 2 vitamin D products, vitamin D tablets for those who are breastfeeding and vitamin D drops suitable for children from birth.

Both products contain the recommended amounts of 10 micrograms of vitamin D3 with each bottle 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?**

Healthy Start vitamins are provided 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.



## 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, family nurse or community pharmacist for more information.

Scan the QR code to visit the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde website:  
🌐 [www.nhsggc.scot/vitaminD](http://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)





