

Vitamin D for Babies and Children

Why do babies and children need vitamin D?

Vitamin D helps build strong bones and teeth. Children can develop a disease called rickets (soft bones) if they don't get enough vitamin D. The role of vitamin D to prevent other diseases is also being studied.

Children can get vitamin D from the sun, food, and supplements.

Vitamin D from the sun

Our bodies can make vitamin D when our bare skin is exposed to sunlight. However, sun safe practices like wearing sunscreen and staying out of direct sunlight stop vitamin D from being made. Also, in our northern climate the sun's rays are not strong enough to make vitamin D in the winter months.

How much vitamin D do babies and children need?

It's not possible to safely get all the vitamin D we need from the sun. Babies and children need to get vitamin D from food and a supplement.

Every day, babies (0 to 12 months) need:

- 400 IU vitamin D from a supplement

Every day, children (1 to 18 years) need:

- 400 IU vitamin D from a supplement
- 200 IU from food

IU = International Unit

Food sources of vitamin D

Vitamin D is found in very few foods. **Canada's Food Guide** recommends that everyone age 2 and older drink 2 cups (500 mL) of fluid milk each day to help meet their vitamin D needs.

Food	Serving size	Vitamin D content per serving
Breastmilk		
Breastmilk	1 cup (250 mL)	About 10 IU
Best Sources		
Fatty fish (for example, salmon, herring, rainbow trout)	2.5 oz (75 g)	About 200 IU or more
Good Sources		
Cow's milk*	1 cup (250 mL)	About 100 IU
Goat's milk* with vitamin D added		
Soy beverage* with vitamin D added		
Infant formula		
Sources		
Yogurt with vitamin D added	¾ cup (175 g)	About 50–100 IU
Egg yolks	2 large	
Margarine	1 Tbsp (15 mL)	

* Wait until your baby is 9 to 12 months old before you offer whole milk (3.25% milk fat). Wait until your child is 2 years old before you offer soy beverages and lower fat milk (2%, 1%, and skim).

Vitamin D supplements

It is hard for babies and children to get enough vitamin D from food sources alone.

- While breastmilk and infant formula contain vitamin D, breastfed babies aren't able to meet their vitamin D needs through breastmilk alone.
- Babies drinking infant formula may not always drink the amount that would meet their vitamin D needs.

All babies and children from birth to 18 years need a 400 IU vitamin D supplement every day.

Based on your child's needs, the doctor may recommend a different amount of vitamin D.

Choosing a vitamin D supplement

- ✓ Choose a **single vitamin D** supplement (with no other vitamins). Multivitamins are not recommended for babies and most children don't need them. Check with your child's healthcare provider if you have questions.
- ✓ **Look for a Natural Product Number (NPN)** on supplement bottles. This number tells you that Health Canada finds the product to be safe and useful if you follow the directions on the package.
- ✓ **Be aware** that different brands have different amounts of vitamin D. Choose a product that comes in a dose of 400 IU.



NPN 12345678

Give your baby a vitamin D supplement every day starting when he or she is born.

- ✓ **Choose a safe form** of vitamin D. Vitamin D supplements come in many forms.

- Liquid – the best form for babies.
- Chewable – can use when your child can chew and swallow safely.
- Tablet – can use when your child can swallow pills safely.

Always keep supplements out of the reach of children.

- ✓ **Read the label carefully to make sure you give the right dose.**

Some brands of liquid vitamin D give the dose in “mL” (for example, 400 IU = 1 mL), while others give the dose in drops (for example, 400 IU = 1 drop).

Too much vitamin D

Large doses of vitamin D can harm your child. The chart below shows the maximum safe amount of vitamin D each day.

Age group	Maximum safe amount of vitamin D a day*
0–6 months	1000 IU
7–12 months	1500 IU
1–3 years	2500 IU
4–8 years	3000 IU
9–18 years	4000 IU

*Total from food and supplement

Your child should take **no more** than the amount listed in the table from food and supplements combined. Talk to your child's healthcare provider if you have questions.