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VITAMIN D AND PREGNANCY

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VITAMIN D AND PREGNANCY

Your body needs vitamin D to maintain healthy levels of calcium and phosphorus, these help build your baby's bones and teeth.

If you don't have enough vitamin D during pregnancy, your baby may be born with low vitamin D levels. This can put your baby at risk of:

- rickets (which can lead to deformed and broken bones)
- abnormal bone growth!
- delayed physical development.

There is some evidence that low levels of vitamin D in pregnancy can be associated with gestational diabetes, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy and preterm birth.

SOURCES OF VITAMIN D

Sun exposure is the main source of vitamin D in New Zealand.

Try to get some outdoor physical activity before 10 am or after 4 pm between September and April, and around the middle of the day between May and August. The lighter your skin, the less time you need to be in the sun to make enough vitamin D. Don't get sunburnt!

Small amounts of vitamin D can be found in foods such as:

- fatty fish (eg, canned salmon, tuna or sardines)
- eggs
- liver
- some margarines, milks and yoghurts.

However, it's hard to get enough vitamin D from diet alone.

WHO ARE THE HIGH-RISK GROUPS?

If you are pregnant and:

- have darker skin
- completely avoid sun exposure
- have liver or kidney disease
- are on certain medications (eg, anticonvulsants)

If your baby is breastfed and:

- has naturally dark skin
- you have been told that you are low in vitamin D



- one or more of your children has had rickets or seizures resulting from low blood calcium levels

Babies who are born preterm with low body weight may be vitamin D deficient.

Babies who are breastfed over winter months in New Zealand may also be vitamin D deficient by late winter/spring.

SUPPLEMENTS FOR VITAMIN D

If you are at high risk of vitamin D deficiency, talk to your doctor, midwife or dietitian. Your doctor can prescribe a subsidised monthly 1.25 mg cholecalciferol (vitamin D) tablet throughout your pregnancy. If you have no other risk factors, but live south of Nelson-Marlborough, talk to your doctor about vitamin D supplementation over winter months.

References

Mulligan ML, et al. Implications of vitamin D deficiency in pregnancy and lactation. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2010;202: 429

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http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/topic_sheets/vitamin-d-your-pregnancy-vitamin-d-your-baby-v2.pdf

