



Vitamin D for Breastfed Infants and Toddlers in Northern BC

Vitamin D helps to build strong bones and teeth, and supports good health.

Why does my child need a vitamin D supplement?

Breastfeeding is the normal, natural and optimal way to feed your baby, and is recommended to two years and beyond. Most foods are low in vitamin D, including breast milk. In northern BC, it is also hard to make enough vitamin D from the sun because:

- our skin can only make vitamin D during the summer months,
- we protect our skin from the sun, with clothing, shade, and sunscreen (after six months of age), and
- our skin cannot make vitamin D when it is protected from the sun.

The most reliable way to give your child vitamin D is through a daily supplement.

Babies fed any amount of breast milk need a daily vitamin D supplement, year round.

How much do I give my child?

- Give 400 International Units (IU) of liquid vitamin D once daily if your child drinks breast milk or if your child drinks both breast milk and formula.
- If you forget one day, give only one dose the next day. Do not give extra to make up for missed days.

How long does my child need a vitamin D supplement?

- Give a 400 IU liquid vitamin D supplement for as long as your child receives breast milk, or until they are two years old and are getting enough vitamin D from their diet.
- For more information, see “Vitamin D for Children in Northern BC” handout.

How do I choose a supplement?

- Vitamin D supplements can be bought at a grocery store or pharmacy - ask if you can't find it.
- Choose a liquid vitamin D supplement that provides 400 IU per dose.
- Products vary. They might provide 400 IU per drop, per 0.25 mL or per 1 mL. Check the label for how to measure the right amount. Ask if you are unsure.
- Generic brands are just as good as brand names, and may cost less.
- Pregnancy outreach programs may provide free supplements for their clients.

If I take a supplement, will my child get enough vitamin D from my breast milk?

- A supplement might help you to meet your vitamin D needs.
- Most supplements do not raise levels of vitamin D in breast milk enough to meet your child's needs. High levels of maternal supplementation (above recommended safe amounts) are needed to raise levels of vitamin D in breast milk.
- A vitamin D supplement for your child is the most reliable way to ensure that they are getting the vitamin D they need.

Do babies that are fed formula need a vitamin D supplement?

- Store-bought infant formula has vitamin D added into it. If your baby only receives formula, a vitamin D supplement is not usually needed. However, in some situations health care providers may suggest a supplement.



A daily vitamin D supplement does the sun's job!

Talk to your health care provider about your child's vitamin D needs.
To speak with a Registered Dietitian at HealthLinkBC, call 811 (or 604-215-8110).

