



About Vitamin D

Vitamin D is a substance that regulates many different processes in the human body. Primarily, vitamin D is involved in regulating calcium absorption. It is produced by our bodies' liver and transformed to the active form by sun exposure. However, the amount of Vitamin D produced by our own internal sources is not sufficient for our bodies' needs. Consequently, most Americans are deficient in this important substance.

Low vitamin D levels are associated with osteoporosis, depression, neurologic diseases such as multiple sclerosis as well as breast and colon cancer. Recent studies of babies born to women with vitamin D deficiency have poorer developmental outcomes. Furthermore, men with low vitamin D levels have a higher risk of heart disease. People with adequate levels of Vitamin D in their bodies report an overall feeling of wellbeing.

It is recommended that infants who are breast fed, receive 400 IU/day of Vitamin D supplementation. This can be given by drops that are readily available at most pharmacies and grocery stores. The Vitamin D drops come in 2 different concentrations: 400 IU per 1 ml or 400 IU per drop. It doesn't matter which concentration you buy so long as you know which one you have and give the proper dosage. Many nursing moms choose to use the more concentrated drops and administer the daily dose by putting 1 drop on their nipple right before they nurse the baby. The less concentrated drops can be put either directly in the baby's mouth or in a bottle if the child is receiving bottles of breast milk on a daily basis.

Exclusively formula fed babies don't need to receive vitamin D as it is already in the formula. Recent studies, show that newborn infants in the first 4 months need an increased amount of vitamin D. **Enfamil Newborn®** formula is produced with twice as much vitamin D just for that reason. Thus parents of formula fed babies may choose to still give vitamin D for the first 4 months if they are not using this brand of formula. If a child is receiving both formula and breast milk, I generally err on the side of giving the supplement as most children are deficient and it is very difficult to actually overdose on this vitamin.

Children over a year of age should receive about 1000 IU of vitamin D per day. Adults should target 2000 IU per day. Despite this, some adults on this dosage still have less than ideal vitamin D levels. I personally take 5000 IU of vitamin D every morning.

I don't generally test my patient's vitamin D level at a set age or time. When I do have a situation that involves the need for a patient to have a blood test, I generally add on a vitamin D level. The majority of these tests reveal a level that is truly deficient or below the optimal level. This often occurs in children who by history drink milk on a daily basis. Because of this, I try to encourage both my patients and their parents to take vitamin D supplements as consistently as possible. As more and more studies are done, the importance of this crucial vitamin in human health and disease prevention becomes more and more clear.

--Be Well

Drew Nash, MD