



Vitamin supplements for babies and children?



Which babies and Children need Supplements?

Babies

Babies born at full term who are breastfed need extra vitamins A & D from 6 months. Breastfed babies will need to start these vitamins at 1 month of age if their mother's vitamin status during pregnancy was considered low.

Term babies who are fed on formula milk need vitamins A & D once they are over 6 months and drinking less than 500mls infant formula per day (vitamins A & D are added into the formula and this provides enough for babies who are drinking more than 500mls).

In some areas where vitamin D deficiency is high, many children develop rickets. In these areas some NHS Trusts recommend all term babies begin these supplements at birth.

Preterm babies who are breastfed will be discharged from hospital on multivitamin and iron supplements.

Preterm babies being fed on the special formula for preterm babies do not need any extra vitamin supplements as they are added into the formula.

When preterm babies stop their multivitamin and iron supplement or change their milk drink from the special formula for preterm infants they should all begin a vitamin supplement containing vitamins A & D.

Children 1 - 5 years

A supplement of vitamins A & D is recommended as many children of this age do not get enough of these 2 vitamins from their food.

Children over five years

There are no recommendations to take vitamin and mineral supplements for these children.

Teenage Girls

Adolescent girls who could become pregnant need a daily supplement containing 400mcg folic acid and 10mcg vitamin D. The cheapest and most suitable supplement is

the NHS Healthy Start Vitamins for Women which should be available in all retail pharmacies.

Where to find suitable vitamin A & D supplements for Children

Suitable supplements containing vitamins A and D for babies and children under five years can be bought in retail pharmacies and from some NHS Clinics. The NHS Healthy Start children's vitamin drops should be sold by all NHS Health Clinics.

Why do babies and children under 5 years need vitamins A & D

Even on a healthy balanced diet babies and children under 5 years have such high requirements for these two vitamins that many of them do not get enough of them from food. Both these vitamins are important for the immune system and vitamin D is essential for good bone health and preventing rickets.

The babies and children most at risk of not getting enough vitamin D are those with dark skins from Asian, African and Middle Eastern families who are living in northern European countries such as the UK. They need more sunshine to make vitamin D on their skin than white babies and children. Vitamin D is only made in skin in the UK during the summer months, April to September and it is the main source of vitamin D as there is very little in food.

Only oily fish such as sardines, kippers, salmon, pilchards and trout are good sources of vitamin D. Meat and eggs contain a little vitamin D. Other foods contain negligible amounts, except margarine which is fortified with it.

