

Factsheets for Early Years settings:

Vitamin Supplements



HEALTHY EARLY YEARS AWARD
Southampton

Vitamin D Deficiency: The issue

- **Vitamin D** deficiency is becoming increasingly common in children in the UK
- Vitamin D helps the body to absorb dietary calcium and phosphorus to make healthy bones
- Deficiency can result in 'rickets', which causes bone deformities
- Whilst all children are at risk, the following group are particularly at risk:
 - Ethnic minorities whose darker skin is unable to produce enough Vitamin D
 - Children confined indoors for long periods of time
 - Children who cover their skin for cultural reasons
- Most of the vitamin D we need is obtained by the action of sunlight on the skin, but winter sunlight in the UK is not sufficient for our bodies to make vitamin D.

Tips for preventing vitamin D deficiency, in addition to taking supplements:

- Try to get at least 2-3 sunlight exposures per week (20-30 mins each) on the face and hands without sunscreen between 10am and 3pm, during April to September to top up Vitamin D levels
- Take care to ensure sunburn is avoided, so allow children to play outside without sunscreen at times when they are unlikely to burn
- Children with darker skins will need to spend longer outside
- Encourage physical activity outside, e.g. going to the park, walking to and from preschool or nursery
- Include food sources of vitamin D - small amounts of vitamin D are found in oily fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel, and sardines), eggs, meat, fortified breakfast cereals and spreads.

A daily supplement of vitamin D (containing 10 micrograms) is recommended for all children under the age of 5*

**This is not needed if a child is having more than 500ml infant formula milk as it has vitamins added*

HEALTHY START

Healthy Start Vitamins

- These contain 10 µg of Vitamin D per dose and are suitable birth to 5 years
- They also contain vitamin A and vitamin C
- They are free for children from birth to 4 years for families in receipt of certain benefits, which include a) income support, b) Jobseeker's Allowance, c) Employment & Support Allowance and d) in receipt of Child Tax Credit and have a family income less than £16,190, Pension credit or Universal credit
- They are suitable for vegetarians and free from milk, egg, gluten, soy and peanut residues
- See www.healthystart.nhs.uk for further details.