

# 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](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk) for further details.