

We continually strive to improve the quality of information given to patients. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding this information booklet, please contact:

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Approvals:

Maternity Guidelines Group: V1 April 2013, V2 May 2016 & Jan 2017, V3 Mar 2019

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Patient Experience Group: V1 Aug 2013, V2 Jul 2017

Division of Women, Children & Sexual Health Services

How can I help to reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming into and after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

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Vitamin D

In pregnancy, breastfeeding and children under 5

This leaflet has been written to help you understand the benefits of taking vitamin D supplements when you are pregnant or breastfeeding

Patient information leaflet

If you want this leaflet in another language please call your Community Midwife or Health Visitor

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

What does vitamin D do?

Vitamin D regulates the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body, which helps to keep bones, teeth and muscles strong and healthy. It also strengthens the immune system.

Why is it recommended that pregnant and breastfeeding women take vitamin D?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding you should take a vitamin D supplement to:

- prevent you or your baby developing vitamin D deficiency
- keep your and your baby's bones healthy
- prevent your baby's bones becoming curved (a condition known as "rickets")
- help your baby gain weight in the first year of life.

You have an increased risk of vitamin D deficiency if:

- you have a Body Mass Index (BMI) greater than 30
- you are of South Asian, African, Caribbean or Middle Eastern descent
- you stay indoors a lot
- you have limited skin exposure to the sun

However, all pregnant and breastfeeding women are at risk of vitamin D deficiency and should take vitamin D to prevent the effects of vitamin D deficiency.

How much vitamin D should you take?

It is recommended that pregnant and breastfeeding mothers take a daily vitamin D supplement of 10 micrograms / 400 units.

Ask your Community Midwife whether you qualify for free Healthy Start Vitamins for pregnancy. These include the recommended 10micrograms/400 units vitamin D.

If you do not qualify for Healthy Start vouchers it is possible to buy pregnancy multivitamins which include 10 microgram/400 units of vitamin D at your local pharmacy.

Your midwife will advise you if you need a higher dose of vitamin D supplementation.

Do babies and children need vitamin D supplements?

✓ **Breastfed babies from birth to one year of age** should be given a daily supplement containing 8.5 -10 micrograms of vitamin D, to make sure they get enough.

✗ **Babies fed infant formula** should not be given a supplement until they are receiving less than 500ml (about a pint) of infant formula a day, because infant formula is supplemented with vitamin D.

✓ **Children aged 1 to 4 years old** should be given a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D

Exclusive breastfeeding until around six months will help you protect your baby from illness and infection. Babies that are not breastfed are more likely to get diarrhoea, vomiting and respiratory infections.

Ask your Health Visitor if you qualify for free Healthy Start Children's Vitamin Drops. If you do not qualify for Healthy Start vouchers it is possible to buy supplements from your pharmacy.

Are there any natural sources of vitamin D?

Vitamin D is found naturally in a small number of foods, including oily fish, red meat, liver and egg yolks. Some milk, breakfast cereals and fat spreads are fortified with vitamin D.

However it is difficult to get the recommended amount of vitamin D from food alone.

The main source of vitamin D is from the action of sunlight on your skin, but only during the summer (April - September).

Also, this is not a reliable source of vitamin D for all as exposure to sunlight varies for health, social and cultural reasons and in relation to your ethnic origin.

Further Information:

If you need further information about vitamin D in pregnancy, breastfeeding or for your child under 5 years of age, please contact your Midwife, Health Visitor or GP.

NHS Choices website: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/vitamins-for-children.aspx>