

**Frequently Asked Questions and Answers
About Vitamin D Supplementation for Infants and Children 6/2007**

Your clients may receive recommendations from a health care provider to give their babies vitamin D drops. They may ask you questions about these recommendations and wonder about the adequacy of their breast milk. Listed below are answers to some questions that you may receive or that you may have yourself regarding vitamin D supplementation. It is important to refer the client back to their health care provider if you do not have access to their medical chart and are not aware of the other factors that could be involved. The goal of this frequently asked questions and answers is to provide you with general information about vitamin D, rickets and breastfeeding.

Question	Answer
1. What is vitamin D?	Vitamin D is produced in the body with the aid of direct exposure of the skin to ultraviolet B radiation in sunlight. There are few dietary sources of vitamin D.
2. What are the dietary sources of vitamin D?	Common natural food sources do not contain adequate amounts of vitamin D to meet nutritional needs for growth. So food fortification is used to meet the population's need for this nutrient. Fatty fish oils and livers (liver may contain toxic contaminants, so should be consumed in limited amounts) are the few natural sources of this vitamin. Breast milk contains some vitamin D which partially meets the needs of the breastfed infant. The most common dietary source is from fortified foods such as vitamin D fortified cow and soy milk. Not all milk is fortified with vitamin D – you have to read the label. Most cheeses and yogurts are not fortified with vitamin D.
3. Why should I worry about vitamin D?	When children don't get enough vitamin D, their bones and muscles can become weak and it is easier for them to get sick and break or bow bones. Not enough vitamin D can prevent a child from growing well. After a while, these children can get rickets, a disease of severe and chronic bone demineralization.
4. Why did my doctor tell me to give vitamin D drops to my baby?	Our bodies can make vitamin D when we get enough sunshine. However, some people, especially babies, do not get the amount of sunshine needed to make enough vitamin D. Pollution, bad weather, dark skin and use of sunscreens all make it hard to get enough

	<p>sunshine. Additionally, adequate dietary sources of vitamin D for infants are limited to fortified infant formula.</p> <p>Your doctor is concerned about the health of your baby. If breastmilk is the only milk you are feeding your baby, you will need to give vitamin D drops as a way to get enough vitamin D. Keep breastfeeding - it's the best for you and your baby!</p>
5. Is my breastmilk missing something?	Your milk offers many nutrients and special immunities that other feedings do not offer. Vitamin D can easily be supplemented when babies receive most of their nutrition from breastmilk.
6. Should I be giving my baby formula?	<p>Breastfeeding is the normal and recommended way to feed your baby!</p> <p>Don't give your baby infant formula just to get vitamin D, as introducing formula will decrease your milk supply. Your baby will receive the best nutrition by breastfeeding and following your doctor's advice about vitamin D supplementation.</p>
7. Why don't formula-fed babies need this supplement?	If a baby or child is not consuming at least 16 oz of formula per day, they would also need the supplement. Because vitamin D is very important for young growing babies, all formula sold in the US must contain a certain amount of vitamin D. Again, it is important to continue breast feeding because there are many nutrients found in breast milk that formula does not have.
8. If I breastfeed and give my child milk or formula, could s/he be getting too much vitamin D?	<p>No. The amount recommended by doctors is not high enough to worry about overdosing your child. Doctors do recommend to stop giving vitamin D supplements once your child is drinking 16 ounces per day of vitamin D fortified milk (for children 12 months or older) or infant formula.</p> <p>The recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is to discontinue the supplement once a child consumes 500 mL (approximately 2 cups) per day of fortified milk or formula.¹</p> <p>Caution! Over consuming vitamin D “supplements”</p>

	can be dangerous to children. Like any other vitamins and medicine, keep vitamin D supplements out of the reach of children.
9. Should I keep giving vitamin D to my child after s/he turns a year?	Vitamin D supplements are not just for breastfed babies! The AAP recommends that children receive a supplement if they do not drink at least 2 cups of vitamin D fortified milk daily. Ask your doctor whether your child should be given vitamin D.
10. What if I don't want to give my baby vitamin D?	<p>Infancy is an important time to build bones and vitamin D is essential for proper bone growth. Talk to your doctor about giving your baby vitamin D drops.</p> <p>Traditionally, babies relied on sun exposure for vitamin D, but this is not the current recommendation. In fact, the AAP also recommends that infants under 6 months of age should not be exposed to direct sunlight.</p>
11. If I am drinking enough milk and getting enough sunshine, wouldn't my breastmilk have enough vitamin D?	Even if you are getting enough vitamin D, your baby may not get enough vitamin D. Your baby still needs vitamin D supplementation. Talk with your doctor about how to get vitamin D supplementation for your baby.
12. What do pediatricians recommend?	<p>According to the AAP, beginning by two months of age, 200 IU of vitamin D should be given in the following situations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exclusively breastfed infants under 1 year of age (no formula), 2. Breastfed infants under 1 year of age, who ingest less than 500 mL per day (approximately 16 oz.) of vitamin D fortified infant formula, 3. Non-breastfed infants under 1 year of age who ingest less than 500 mL per day of vitamin D fortified infant formula, and 4. Children and adolescents who do not get regular sunlight exposure, and do not ingest at least 500 mL per day of vitamin D fortified milk, or do not take a daily multivitamin supplement containing at least 200 IU of Vitamin D.
14. Should we recommend to our breastfeeding clients to give vitamin D	Tell them about the recommendation of the AAP and encourage them to discuss this with their health care provider.

supplements to their infants?	
15. What form does the infant supplement come in and what is its name?	Most supplements for infants are in liquid form. At present there is no single vitamin D supplement. One common supplement is called Tri-Vi-Sol, which contains vitamin A (1500 IU), vitamin D (400 IU) and vitamin C (35 mg). Clients should follow their health care provider's recommendations regarding dosages.
16. What is the State's position on this statement?	The California Department of Health Services supports the AAP recommendation. Whether to supplement is a decision that should be made by the mother upon consultation with her health care provider.