



## The New Story on Vitamin D

Vitamin supplement recommendations seem to go in and out of fashion. First we hear they are important, and then not so much. And some explanations are more convincing than others.

Although we have always been somewhat skeptical of vitamin recommendations, it now seems that adding Vitamin D actually might be more important than we realized. In fact, we at Bayside have changed our recommendation—we now recommend that breast-fed infants and most children take Vitamin D supplementation regularly.

### What does Vitamin D do?

Vitamin D helps to build strong bones, but it also has a role in preventing cancer and autoimmune diseases (these are diseases where a person's immune system makes a mistake, and thinks some part of the body is a foreign invader, and tries to get rid of it). And like other vitamins,

Vitamin D probably does lots of things we don't yet know about. In

older adults, low Vitamin D has recently been connected to lower mental functioning. So, it is an important vitamin.

What triggered concern with Vitamin D was a rash of discoveries of rickets (soft bones) in patients with dark skin who were breast fed in the American South. Rickets was supposed to be a disease of the past! But here it was, right here at home. Then, as people looked harder at Vitamin D and measured actual blood levels around the country, many more people turned out to have lower than normal values. Even here at Bayside we have discovered patients with rickets.

### How do we get Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is the "sunshine vitamin." Our bodies produce Vitamin D when sunshine directly hits our skin, especially around midday. There is uncertainty about how much sunlight we need each week to produce enough Vitamin D;

some sources say that for light-skinned people, 5-20 minutes of mid-day sun three times per week may be enough; others suggest that much more is necessary. And darker-skinned people need more sun than lighter-skinned people to produce Vitamin D. Even if you are fair-skinned, you can't get Vitamin D from the sun when you are wearing sunscreen, when sunlight comes through windows, or in the early morning or late afternoon when the sun is weaker. It has to be direct sunlight on your skin. But the problem with sunlight is that too much of it is not good for our skin—it causes wrinkles and can even cause cancer. So we recommend avoiding too much sun and using sunscreen to protect the skin, but at the same time we know that we need to get enough Vitamin D. So, what to do?

Luckily, we can also get Vitamin D orally, either from foods (see chart below) or from vitamin supplements.

Here are our recommendations:

**Infants who are breast fed:** We recommend that all breast fed infants be given a Vitamin D supplement, 400 IU (international units) per day.

- This can be given as an infant multivitamin (Poly-vi-sol, Tri-vi-sol, Vi-Daylin ADC, or generic equivalents). The dose is **1 dropperful per day**, which contains one milliliter (ml).
- Or, you can give only Vitamin D by itself.
  - If you choose "Sunlight Just D," the dose is the same as for the multivitamins, 400 IU in **1 dropperful per day** (one ml).
  - If you choose "Carlson's Baby D Drops", be careful! The Vitamin D in Carlson's is very concentrated, with 400 IU in a **single drop**, not a dropperful! The dose with Carlson's is **1 drop per day**.

**Infants who are formula fed:** We recommend that formula-fed infants *not* be given extra Vitamin D, since it's already added to formula.

**Infants on both breast and formula:** If your

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## VITAMIN D

baby is drinking both formula and breast milk, we recommend only a partial supplement of Vitamin D if the amount of formula is less than 16-24 oz. per day. *(While small amounts of extra Vitamin D are generally not dangerous, there is a recent study showing a higher risk of urinary tract infections in the first three months of life in formula-fed babies who receive additional Vitamin D supplements.)*

**Children and teenagers:** We recommend that all children and teens take a Vitamin D supplement of 400 IU (international units) per day. Most Vitamin Drops, chewables and tablets for children, as labeled for age, will contain 400 IU per dose.

Note that milk has Vitamin D added to it, but it would take a full quart of milk per day to get a full dose of Vitamin D, which would be far too much milk for kids to drink. It's better just to take the Vitamin D supplement and drink no more than 16 oz. of milk per day. If your child gets little sun or is dark-skinned, and drinks very little milk, supplementing with a vitamin is even more important.

**Adults:** 800 IU of Vitamin D per day by supplement is generally recommended. You can get this from multi-vitamins or from unitary Vitamin D doses (check the label).

Let us know if you have any questions.

### Selected Food Sources of Vitamin D

### IU Vitamin D Per Serving

Salmon, cooked, 3.5 oz.	360
Mackerel, cooked, 3.5 oz.	345
Tuna fish, canned in oil, 3 oz.	200
Sardines, canned in oil, drained, 1.75 oz.	250
Milk, nonfat, reduced fat, and whole, vitamin D-fortified, 1 cup	98
Egg, 1 whole (vitamin D is found in yolk)	20
Liver, beef, cooked, 3.5 oz.	15
Cheese, Swiss, 1 oz.	12