

Vitamin D Levels In Children

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Maintaining optimum vitamin D levels in children is essential. Vitamin D is necessary for bone growth and development in children. But current studies indicate adequate vitamin D levels may play a role in the [prevention of some chronic diseases](#) (& also see [EAT SMART Newsletter issue August 11, 2009](#)). The new American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) vitamin D guidelines for infants, children and adolescents was released in October of 2008. In the past, the recommendation was 200 international units (IUs) daily. It is doubled to a recommended 400 IUs daily.

The AAP's report recommends that the following groups receive a [daily supplement of 400 IU](#) of vitamin D:

- Breastfed and partially breastfed infants
- Non-breastfed infants, as well as older children, who are drinking less than a quart per day of vitamin D-fortified formula or milk
- Adolescents who do not obtain 400 IU of vitamin D daily through food
- Children with an increased risk for vitamin D deficiency, such as those taking certain prescription medications.

Commonly known as the sunshine vitamin, the precursor of vitamin D from UVB is free. Yet getting enough vitamin D from the sun has its risks and challenges. Sun rays must be at the optimum angle for the best [UVB levels](#) and is related to latitude, time of day, cloud cover, pollution and season of the year. Sunscreens block its production. And [skin cancer](#) is a worry for everyone! Baring children's sensitive skin to the sun, unprotected for prolonged periods of time, is not recommended.

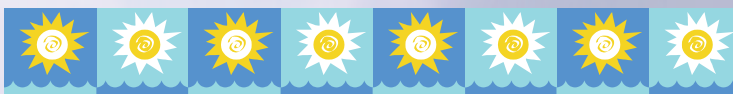


Vitamin D is naturally present in [very few foods](#). Therefore, the FDA [requires](#) that all cows' milk be fortified with vitamin D. The FDA [allows](#) vitamin D fortification in cereals, milk products and fortified fruit juices and drinks. Nutrition labels will list the percent of the DRI ([Dietary Reference Intake](#)) of vitamin D in each serving. So if the label reads vitamin D 25%, that means that each serving provides 100 IU vitamin D. Yet, even with these sources, many children are not receiving enough vitamin D.

Low vitamin D levels are especially common among children who are female, African or Mexican American, obese, drink milk less than once a week, or spend more than four hours a day watching TV, playing videogames, or using computers. CBS News Medical Correspondent [Dr. Jennifer Ashton](#) says low vitamin D levels mean those kids have a higher risk of developing heart, bone and other problems.

However, use caution with supplements. Vitamin D toxicity can cause nausea, poor appetite, constipation, weakness, confusion, and weight loss. But sun exposure does not result in vitamin D toxicity. [Vitamin D toxicity](#) is possible from excess supplemental D. For proper dosage work with your health care provider.

A logical conclusion is to find a balance, assuring adequate intake through diet, sun, and supplements.



References [sciencedaily.com/](#), [cbsnews.com/stories](#), [reuters.com/article/](#), [aafp.org/](#), [ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitamind.asp](#), [NEJournalofMedicine](#)