

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



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For Action by:

Action required by:

Sender: Chief Medical Officer-Medical Director NHS Wales and Chief Nursing Officer – Nurse Director NHS Wales

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Enclosure(s): attached

New Advice on Vitamin D Intake

We are writing to draw your attention to the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition's report on Vitamin D intake, published on 21 July¹. As a result of this report new advice is being issued to the public on how much vitamin D they need and how to obtain it:

From birth up to 1 year of age

Infants from birth to one year of age, whether exclusively or partially breastfed, should be given a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10 micrograms vitamin D to make sure they get enough.

Babies fed infant formula should not be given a vitamin D supplement unless they are receiving less than 500 mls (about a pint) of formula a day because formula is fortified with vitamin D and no other supplementation is required.

Ages 1 to 4 years

Children aged 1 to 4 years of age should be given a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms vitamin D. Some children aged up to 4 may be entitled to free Healthy Start vitamin drops: <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk>

Ages 5 years and above

Between late March/early April and September, the majority of people aged 5 years and above will probably obtain sufficient vitamin D from sunlight when they are outdoors, alongside foods that naturally contain or are fortified with vitamin D. As such, they might choose not to take a vitamin D supplement during these months.

From October to March everyone over the age of five will need to rely on dietary sources of vitamin D. Since vitamin D is found only in a small number of foods, it might be difficult to get enough from foods that naturally contain vitamin D and/or fortified foods alone. So everyone, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D.

However, some groups of people with very little or no sunshine exposure will not obtain enough vitamin D from sunlight. People from these groups should take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms vitamin D throughout the year. They are:

- people who are seldom outdoors such as frail or housebound individuals and those who are confined indoors e.g. in institutions such as care homes
- people who habitually wear clothes that cover most of their skin while outdoors.

People from minority ethnic groups with dark skin such as those of African, African-Caribbean and South Asian origin might not get enough vitamin D

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sacn-vitamin-d-and-health-report>

from sunlight in summer so they should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms vitamin D throughout the year.

Some pregnant women and new mothers may be entitled to free Healthy Start vitamins <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk>

The new advice is provided on these websites directed at the general public:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-minerals/pages/vitamin-d.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Summerhealth/Pages/vitamin-D-sunlight.aspx>

These small but important changes to the Government's advice on vitamin D can help reduce potential deficiency in at risk groups. As health professionals, you can make a significant difference to people's health by making those at risk aware of how important it is to make sure they get enough vitamin D, and how they can get access to these important daily supplements. Families who are not eligible for free Healthy Start vitamins can be signposted to their local pharmacy for help with choosing an appropriate product. Most families will need to purchase these rather than have them prescribed by a GP.

We thank you for your continued help and support with raising awareness of this issue across Wales, which in turn should raise the levels of vitamin D in those at risk, and vulnerable groups.