

# Vitamin D deficiency in children

## What is it?

Vitamin D deficiency is common. If your child has a vitamin D deficiency it means they do not have enough vitamin D in their body. Vitamin D helps our bodies absorb calcium for healthy bone growth. In children, a vitamin D deficiency can cause soft and weak bones, muscle weakness and pain. It can also make them more likely to break a bone. It may also make it harder to learn how to use their arms, legs, hands and feet.

The body makes vitamin D when the skin is exposed to the sun. It can also get vitamin D through food. The amount of vitamin D the body can make might vary due to:

- The time of year
- How often you are outside
- Taking certain medications
- Having certain medical conditions

People with darker skin or who live in colder climates find it harder to make vitamin D.

## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- What is a safe level of sun exposure?
- What foods should my child eat?
- Will my child need medication?



## What will my GP do now?

Your GP will talk to you about your child's health. They will organise for your child to have a blood test. Based on the results they will tell you how to increase their Vitamin D levels. Treatments may include safe sun exposure, changes to diet or medication.

## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will want to see you again at four, eight and 12 weeks for check-ups. They will see how your child is feeling and monitor their vitamin D levels.

If your child is not getting better, your GP may refer you to a specialist called a paediatrician.

## What can I do?

Make sure your child spends time outdoors. Follow your GPs advice about any medication or dietary changes to make. Foods with good levels of vitamin D include fatty fish, egg, some meats and mushrooms. Some foods also have vitamin D added to them. These include some breakfast cereals, low-fat dairy products and margarines.

Infant formulas also contain vitamin D.

## What supports are available?

### Local

View this factsheet on the Health Resource Directory website ([www.healthresourcedirectory.org.au](http://www.healthresourcedirectory.org.au)) to find the right local supports and services for you.

## Where can I learn more?

- Raising Children Network - Vitamin D: What you need to know: [raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)
- The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne - Vitamin D: [rch.org.au](http://rch.org.au)