

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) 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
- **The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne** - Vitamin D: rch.org.au