

NUTRITION

Vitamin D for Babies: Why Supplements Matter and Best Sources

The AAP recommends vitamin D supplements for all breastfed babies from birth. Learn why vitamin D is essential, how much to give, food sources, and supplement safety.

Key Takeaways

- The general recommendation in the first year is about 400 IU of vitamin D per day.
- Breast milk is naturally low in vitamin D, so vitamin D supplementation is commonly advised for breastfed and partially breastfed infants.
- Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium and lay down healthy bone.
- Infant formula is fortified with vitamin D, though babies drinking less may still need a supplement.
- Vitamin D is fat-soluble and can build up; never exceed the dose your pediatrician recommends.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does my breastfed baby need a vitamin D supplement?

Most pediatric guidance recommends that breastfed and partially breastfed babies receive a daily vitamin D supplement of about 400 IU, because breast milk is naturally low in vitamin D. Ask your pediatrician for the right product and dose.

What about formula-fed babies?

Infant formula is fortified with vitamin D. Babies drinking enough formula may meet their needs, but if intake is low your pediatrician may still recommend a supplement. Check with them.

How much vitamin D do babies need?

The general recommendation in the first year is around 400 IU per day. Because food and breast milk often fall short, supplements are commonly advised.

Can babies get vitamin D from sunlight?

Skin makes vitamin D from sunlight, but babies under 6 months should be kept out of direct sun, and sun exposure is an unreliable, unsafe way to ensure intake. Diet and supplements are preferred.

Which foods contain vitamin D?

Few foods are naturally rich in vitamin D. Cooked oily fish like salmon, egg yolks, and some fortified foods contribute, but usually not enough on their own in infancy.

Can a baby get too much vitamin D?

Yes, excessive supplementation can be harmful. Never exceed the dose your pediatrician recommends, and keep supplements safely out of reach.

Sources

1. Vitamin D — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2. Infant and young child feeding — World Health Organization