

# **Vitamin D and Pregnancy: Are you getting enough?**

---

## **Why is Vitamin D important?**

Vitamin D helps your body absorb and use calcium from food. When you are pregnant, vitamin D helps you maintain your bones while also helping your baby to develop healthy bones and a healthy body.

Vitamin D also helps support a healthy immune system and helps control blood pressure.

---

## Am I getting enough vitamin D?

A vitamin D deficiency means having a low level of vitamin D in the blood. Your vitamin D level is measured by a blood test. Vitamin D deficiency is common among pregnant and breastfeeding women, and their newborns in Canada.

You can get vitamin D from sunlight, food or a supplement. However, it is difficult to get enough vitamin D from food alone. It is also difficult to get enough vitamin D from the sunlight in the fall and winter months in Canada. You will most likely need to take a vitamin D supplement.

You are at increased risk of a vitamin D deficiency if you:

- do not have enough exposure to sunlight
- have a diet low in foods that have vitamin D
- are obese
- have had gastric bypass surgery
- have darker skin colour
- consistently wear clothing that completely covers all skin
- have other health conditions, such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)

Infants who are born to a mother with a vitamin D deficiency or who are fully or partially breastfed, are at increased risk of having a vitamin D deficiency.

## How much Vitamin D do I need when I am pregnant?

The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends an intake of 2000 International Units (IU) of vitamin D a day for women who are pregnant and breastfeeding (50 years and under). This level is based on not having enough exposure to sunlight.

Your health care provider will recommend an amount of vitamin D that is right for you.

---

## How much Vitamin D does my baby need?

Babies who are fully or partially breastfed need supplementation. The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends supplementation of 400 to 800 IU a day, from birth until 12 months of age or until the baby's diet contains 400 IU a day. Because infant formulas are fortified with vitamin D, formula fed babies do not need extra supplementation.

## Vitamin D supplementation

There are a number of vitamin D supplements. Your health care provider can help you decide which one is right for you. Below are some examples:



Ddrops

Jamieson pills

Jamieson soft chews

## Why should I supplement with vitamin D?

If your baby does not get enough vitamin D during pregnancy or while breastfeeding, he or she is at risk for developing:

- rickets
- osteomalacia (weak muscles and bones)
- osteoporosis (decreased bone density)
- autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis
- increased severity of asthma
- higher risk of Type 1 diabetes
- problems with the growth and formation of teeth

Getting enough vitamin D when you are pregnant and breastfeeding through diet and supplementation helps decrease your risk of:

- impaired glucose tolerance
- preeclampsia (high blood pressure at 20 weeks)
- small for gestational age infants

## Common questions

### How much sunshine do I need to make enough vitamin D?

- About 10 to 15 minutes of direct sun exposure (without sunscreen) each day, from May to September.
- Babies less than one year of age should avoid direct sunlight. Sunscreen is not recommended for babies less than 6 months of age as they may get it in their eyes or mouth. Give your baby a vitamin D supplement.

### Can I get vitamin D through my window?

- No. As UV B rays do not go through glass, sunlight through a window will not help your body produce vitamin D.

### Can I get vitamin D through my clothes?

- No. Clothing made from tighter-woven, lightweight, darker fabrics can protect you from the sun's UV rays. Sun-protective clothing is available and blocks even more UV rays from reaching the skin than regular clothing.

### Does cooking destroy vitamin D?

- Yes. Frying fish in oil reduces the vitamin D content of the food. Baking is a better cooking method to preserve the vitamin D content.

## Where can I go for more information?

Canadian Council of Food and Nutrition: [www.ccfm.ca](http://www.ccfm.ca)

Canadian Pediatric Society: [www.cpa.ca](http://www.cpa.ca)

Dairy Goodness: [www.dairygoodness.ca](http://www.dairygoodness.ca)

Dietitians of Canada: [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)

Eat Right Ontario: [www.eatrightontario.ca](http://www.eatrightontario.ca)

Health Canada: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>

Health Link BC: <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile68e.stm>

## Foods that contain Vitamin D

Food Source	Serving Size	Vitamin D level (IU)
<b>Fish</b>		
Fresh salmon, cooked	85 grams or 3 oz *	360 to 1000
Canned sockeye salmon, drained with bones	100 grams	530
Fresh mackerel	3 oz *	350
Canned sardines	3 oz	231
Canned light tuna, drained	100 grams	200
Shrimp	85 grams or 3 oz *	129
Cod	100 grams *	44
<b>Milk and Dairy Products</b>		
Cow's milk (skim, 1%, 2%, buttermilk and Lactaid®)	250 ml or 1 cup	100
Fortified almond, cashew, coconut, rice and soy beverages	250 ml or 1 cup	80 to 100
Yogurt made with vitamin D fortified milk	serving size varies	16 to 60 check label
<b>Other</b>		
Infant formula, prepared	250 ml or 1 cup	100
Orange juice (fortified with calcium and vitamin D)	250 ml or 1 cup	90 to 100
Egg yolk	1 large egg	25
Margarine	1 teaspoon	30
White mushrooms	100 grams	18

\* These are approximate numbers as vitamin levels in fresh fish can vary