

Parents- Info Vitamin D

Vitamin D is produced by the skin in response to the sun's ultraviolet B rays (UVB) . It is necessary for the absorption of calcium. It also participates in the regulation of cells, immunity and cellular metabolism.

Very few foods naturally contain vitamin D. Exposure to sunlight is the main way for the body to synthesize it, but it depends on several factors such as latitude, time of year, skin pigmentation, surface area of exposed skin and the use of sunscreen. In Quebec, given our northern latitude, there is little skin synthesis of vitamin D between the months of October and March.

Recent research suggests that optimal vitamin D status may play an important role in preventing the development of several diseases such as osteoporosis, asthma, autoimmune diseases, diabetes, certain cancers, as well as rickets, a very rare disease characterized by insufficient calcification of bones and cartilage.

During your pregnancy

When mothers have adequate supplies of vitamin D, it is passed on through the placenta, allowing the baby to have adequate supplies for the first two months of life. Currently, Health Canada recommends an adequate vitamin D intake of 600 IU/day for adults, including during pregnancy and lactation.

As a preventive measure for you and your baby's health, it may be wise to ensure that you accumulate an adequate supply of vitamin D through safe sun exposure, eating foods rich in vitamin D and taking a supplement. Sources of vitamin D in the diet include egg yolks, fortified milk or plant-based beverages and salmon.

Why do babies need a vitamin D supplement?

Infants' skin produces very little vitamin D. The Canadian Dermatology Association and Health Canada recommend that children under one year of age avoid exposure to direct sunlight and use sunscreen from six months of age. In addition, breast milk contains only very small amounts of vitamin D (4 to 40 IU per liter).

The Canadian Paediatric Society and Health Canada recommend that all healthy term infants receive a vitamin D supplement of 400 IU/day. This supplementation should begin at birth and continue for up to one year of age or throughout breastfeeding. Vitamin D supplements are available over the counter in pharmacies and can be prescribed by your midwife. Pure forms of vitamin D are preferred to avoid exposing your baby to other substances, such as colorants or sweeteners.