

# Vitamin D

## Is your child getting enough?

Vitamin D deficiency is a very common problem in the UK. Vitamin D is important for good health, strong bones and growth. Most foods contain very little vitamin D naturally and it is mostly made in the skin by exposure to sunlight.

Vitamin D helps your baby's body absorb calcium, which is needed for the healthy development of strong bones and teeth. A deficiency of vitamin D can result in rickets, which affects the way bones develop and grow. The bones of a child with rickets are unable to sufficiently support their body weight, resulting in bowed legs.

The most important source of vitamin D is sunlight. Be aware that exposure of 10 to 15 minutes to the UK summer sun, without suncream, several times a week is probably a safe balance between adequate vitamin D levels and any risk of skin cancer.\* Healthy Start vitamins are available free of charge for all under fives, new mums and pregnant women across Walsall. It is advisable for mums who breastfeed their baby to take a vitamin D supplement. If your baby is six months or older, and/or is drinking less than 500ml (1 pint) of formula milk per day, it is recommended they are given vitamin drops containing vitamins A, C and D.

### Pharmacist says

Vitamin D deficiency can result in rickets in severe cases.

Babies with severe vitamin D deficiency can get muscle cramps, seizures and breathing difficulties. Poor growth can also be a symptom and affected children might be reluctant to start walking. Children with vitamin D deficiency may also be late teething as the development of their milk teeth has been affected.

### Healthy Start

#### free fruit, vegetables and vitamins

Healthy Start is a government scheme for pregnant women or women with children under the age of four who receive certain benefits. Women receive vouchers every week to support a healthy diet if they are receiving income support or other related benefits. The value of the vouchers depends on the number and age of the children. The vouchers can be used to purchase, formula milk, plain cow's milk, fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables

(with no added ingredients), whole or chopped, packaged or loose.

If a family is eligible for Healthy Start vitamins then they are given free and if not, they have the option to buy these from their local chemist. The vitamins supplied for mums are in tablets and the vitamins for babies and children are drops.

- 1** Vitamin D is naturally present in only a few foods such as fortified margarines, eggs and fatty fish.
- 2** Vitamin D is made naturally by the skin when it is exposed to gentle sunlight, so encourage your children to play outside.
- 3** It is advised to give all children vitamin drops with vitamins A, C and D from the age of one to five years old.

\*Source: British Association of Dermatologists.