



Vitamin D

Below is a news release on a clinical report published in the April issue of Pediatrics, the peer-reviewed, scientific journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), released April 7, 2003.

All healthy infants beginning during the first two months of life, children and adolescents should receive vitamin D supplementation to prevent rickets and vitamin D deficiency according to a new clinical report from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) entitled, “Prevention of Rickets and Vitamin D Deficiency: New Guidelines for Vitamin D Intake.” The recommendation includes breastfed infants.

According to the report, “It is recommended that all infants, including those who are exclusively breastfed, have a minimum intake of 400 International Units (IU) of vitamin D per day beginning during the first 2 months of life. In addition, it is recommended that an intake of 400 IU of vitamin D per day be continued throughout childhood and adolescence, because adequate sunlight exposure is not easily determined for a given individual.” This report affirms guideline from the National Academy of Sciences.

Public health officials are becoming increasingly concerned about continued reports of infants who have been diagnosed with rickets, the bone-softening disease caused by insufficient exposure to sunlight and inadequate vitamin D intake. Unfortunately, an infant may be vitamin D-deficient long before being diagnosed with rickets because the symptoms are not obvious.

Sunlight can be a major source of vitamin D, but sunlight exposure is difficult to measure. Factors such as the amount of pigment in your baby’s skin, and skin exposure, affect how much vitamin D the body produces from sunlight. Children should wear sunscreen when they are out in the sun. Sunscreen, however, prevents the skin from making vitamin D.

Exclusively breastfed infants are at increased risk of vitamin D deficiency and rickets. This is because human milk typically contains only small amounts of vitamin D, insufficient to prevent rickets.

“This shouldn’t discourage breastfeeding,” said Nancy Krebs, M.D., FAAP, chair of the AAP Committee on Nutrition. “The good news is that more babies are being breastfed, and we need to be reminded what extra considerations need to go with breastfeeding to best support the health of breastfed infants.”

Most bottle-fed babies, if they are drinking at least 500 ml (17oz.) of formula daily, should be able to get their daily requirements of vitamin D from formula, as all infant formulas sold in the United States contain a sufficient amount of vitamin D.

Vitamin D supplements, in drop or tablet form, are available over-the-counter as part of multivitamin preparations. [Updated March 2012]