

# Pregnancy and Vitamin D

Did you know that vitamin D deficiency is on the rise? Do you know what role vitamin D plays in pregnancy?

## **Why You Should get Enough Vitamin D:**

- Needed for calcium absorption
- Participates in fetal growth
- Helps develop the nervous system
- Assists with lung maturation
- Strengthens fetal immune system

## **How You Know If You Are Deficient?**

- Ask the doctor to check your 25-hydroxy Vitamin D levels
- Low levels are found below 75 nmol/L (or 30 ng/mL) [1]
- Optimal levels are greater than 75 nmol/L (or 30 ng/mL) [1]
- Based on your levels the doctor can recommend a vitamin D dose that is right for you

## **What Are Some Sources Of Vitamin D?**

- The best source is sunlight
- Consider spending 5-10 minutes outside without sunscreen every day
- Be cautious to avoid over exposure to minimize skin cancer risks
- Fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, sardines, and canned tuna are great too [2]
- Limit to three 4-ounce servings of fish per week - eating the bones will provide additional calcium
- Fortified milk, orange juice, and soy milk, which includes yogurt fortified with vitamin D - be sure to read labels [3]
- Supplements

## **Which Type Of Vitamin D Supplementation Is Best?**

- Vitamin D3 or cholecalciferol is more potent than Vitamin D2, ergocalciferol [2]
- 800 IU Vitamin D and 1000 mg calcium per day is efficient in reducing fractures [4]
- Take 400 IU Vitamin D and 500 mg calcium together twice a day for best absorption

## **What are safe Vitamin D intakes?**

- The official safe upper limit (UL) for the general population including pregnant and nursing women is 2000 IU per day [5, 6]
- Scientists recently proposed to increase the UL to 10,000 IU per day [7]
- A clinical trial giving 400 IU (control), 2000 IU and 4000 IU per day to pregnant women for the prevention of low vitamin D levels will be completed in December 2008 [8]

## **Important considerations:**

- Women with darker skin colors produce less Vitamin D from the sun, and will therefore, have a greater chance of being Vitamin D deficient
- People living in northern areas have less sun exposure, therefore additional

Vitamin D supplementation may be needed

- It is important to track changes to your vitamin D level with time since Vitamin D production from the sun declines with age [3]

So go ahead and enjoy some happy moments in the sun. Your baby will thank you!

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4. Uebelhart, B., & Rizzoli, R. (2007). Osteoporosis treatment. *Rev Med Suisse*, 3, 150-153.
5. The Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council
6. Dietary Reference Intakes for Calcium, Phosphorus, Magnesium, Vitamin D, and Fluoride (1997). Retrieved on 5/10/07 from <http://lab.nap.edu/nap/cgi/discover.cgi?term=vitamin%20d&restric=NAP>
7. Trump, D.L., Fakh, M., Chung, I., & Johnson, C.S. (2007). Vitamin D: sunshine, diet and supplements – cancer prevention and therapy. Annual meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research.
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