

You can find out more information online about vitamins during pregnancy and for your baby from the 'Ready Steady Baby' section at www.nhsinform.scot.

Your vitamins journey V1.0

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Your vitamins journey

Information for families about free vitamins from NHS Lothian during pregnancy and early years

The purpose of this leaflet is to inform families what vitamins are available for free from NHS Lothian for the following stages:

- During your pregnancy
- After you have given birth
- As your child gets older

This leaflet will tell you why these vitamins are important and when you will be offered these vitamins from your midwife, health visitor or family nurse.

During your pregnancy

Healthy Start Vitamins

Healthy Start vitamins are free for all pregnant women and made especially for them. They contain 400 micrograms of folic acid and 10 micrograms of vitamin D, as well as 70 milligrams of vitamin C.

Where to get your vitamins?

Your local midwife can supply you with free Healthy Start vitamin tablets before your first appointment. Healthy Start vitamins are also available to buy from your local pharmacy.

At your first appointment you will receive more Healthy Start vitamins to take for the duration of your pregnancy.



Why are these vitamins important?

Folic acid

Your baby's spine (back bone) begins to develop very early in pregnancy. Folic acid helps it to develop properly and helps to prevent defects (such as spina bifida).

We recommend you take a daily 400 micrograms (mcg) folic acid tablet if you are planning to become pregnant and for the first 12 weeks of your pregnancy. If you haven't already started to take a folic acid supplement before you find out you are pregnant, it's not too late to start.

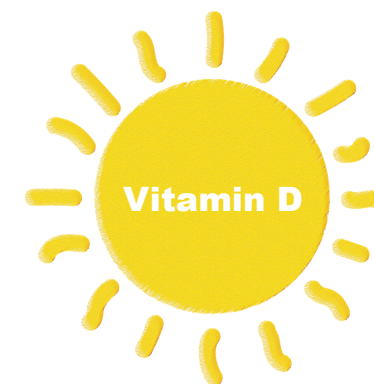
Please note that some women (such as those with certain medical conditions e.g. Coeliac Disease or a family history of neural tube defects and women with a BMI of 30 or above) may require higher doses of folic acid prescribed by a GP. Speak to your midwife or GP about this.



Vitamin D

We get most of our vitamin D from sunlight. In Scotland there is usually not enough sunlight to provide the amount we need. This means that everyone is at risk of low vitamin D. If your skin is covered or you have dark skin, you're also more likely to have low levels of vitamin D.

Vitamin D is very important during pregnancy. Your body and your developing baby need vitamin D to help keep bones healthy. To get enough vitamin D during pregnancy, we recommend you take a supplement of 10 micrograms daily.



After you have given birth

Vitamin D Tablets

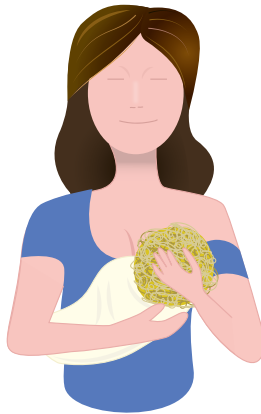
If you are breastfeeding your baby, you will be offered free vitamin D tablets (containing 10 micrograms) to take daily for the time you are breastfeeding. You will receive your first supply of vitamin D tablets on discharge from the maternity unit. If you have a home birth, your midwife will arrange for you to receive your vitamin D tablets at home.

Why is vitamin D important if you are breastfeeding?

If you are breastfeeding your baby, it is recommended that you take a 10 micrograms vitamin D supplement daily. This is to reduce your risk of having a vitamin D deficiency and to get enough vitamin D for your baby's growing bones.

If you have any questions about taking your vitamin D tablets, speak to your midwife, health visitor or family nurse.

If you're not breastfeeding, please follow Public Health Scotland's advice available on the 'Vitamin D and You' leaflet at www.healthscotland.com/documents/5274.aspx



For babies

Vitamin D Drops

Babies who are breastfeeding (or taking less than 500ml of infant formula per day) will be offered free vitamin D drops (containing 10mcg) to take daily. You will be given a supply of vitamin D drops for your baby on discharge from hospital if they need it. Further supplies of vitamin D drops will then be given to you (if required) by your health visitor or family nurse.

Why is vitamin D important for babies?

Babies are at a greater risk of vitamin D deficiency. Therefore, it is recommended they have a daily supplement of 8.5-10 micrograms of vitamin D to help them develop healthy bones. Babies taking infant formula do not need additional vitamin D supplements, unless they are drinking less than 500ml of infant formula a day. This is because infant formula already has vitamin D added to it.



The table below shows which babies need vitamin D drops:

Type of feeding	Should baby be given a vitamin D supplement?
Breastfeeding only	Yes
Infant formula less than 500ml a day	Yes
Infant formula more than 500ml a day	No
Mixed feeding (Breast milk and infant formula)	Yes, if taking less than 500ml of infant formula

If you have any questions about giving your baby vitamin D drops, speak to your midwife, health visitor or family nurse.

As your child gets older

Vitamin D drops

Children up to 3 years will be offered free vitamin D drops, provided they are not taking any infant formula (or if still taking infant formula, this must be less than 500ml per day). Vitamin D drops will be given to you by your health visitor/family nurse at your routine appointments.

If you need more supplies of vitamin D and are not due a home visit or appointment, please contact your health visitor/family nurse.

Why is vitamin D important for children?

Children aged under 5 years are at a higher risk of vitamin D deficiency and should take a supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D. Without enough vitamin D, children can be at risk of developing rickets, which causes weak and badly formed bones.

What about older children?

Vitamin D, or multivitamins containing vitamin D, can be purchased for older children in pharmacies and supermarkets. There is no need to buy expensive vitamins. The main thing to look out for is getting the correct dose of vitamin D, which is 10 micrograms.

Higher doses of vitamin D

For most people 10 micrograms per day of vitamin D will be enough. High doses of vitamin D should be avoided by adults and children unless recommended by your GP. Information on maximum doses can be found at: www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/ Some vitamin supplements may state the dose in micrograms or international units. 10 micrograms is equal to 400 international units.



Further information

For more information on vitamin D, check out the 'Vitamin D and You' leaflet online on the Public Health Scotland website (www.healthscotland.com/documents/5274.aspx). This leaflet is available in English, Arabic, Polish, Traditional Chinese and Urdu. It can be requested in alternative formats such as large print, braille and audio versions.

Best Start Foods Payments

Families on certain payments or benefits will be eligible for Best Start Foods payments. This is a pre-paid card you can use to buy healthy food in shops or online. You can apply for Best Start Food payments when you are pregnant or any time up to your child turning 3 years old. Go to <https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods/> for more information or ask your midwife, health visitor or family nurse about this.

