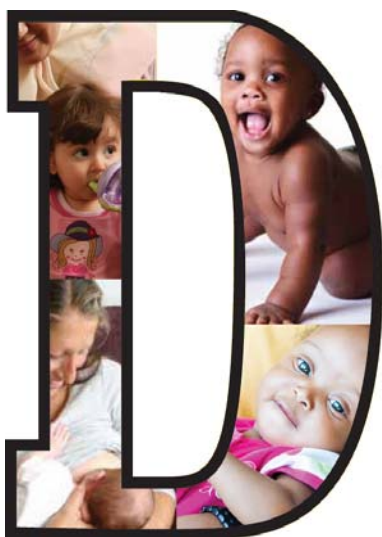


# Free vitamin D for you and your baby



This leaflet explains more about the free vitamin D supplement service in Lambeth and Southwark.

If you have any further questions, please speak to your local pharmacist, health visitor, midwife or GP (home doctor).

## Who can receive free vitamin D supplements?

In Lambeth and Southwark the following people are entitled to free Healthy Start vitamins from their local pharmacy:

- all pregnant women
- all women with a baby under one year old
- all babies and children under the age of 4 years.

To find out if you are entitled and to register for the free vitamin D scheme, speak to your local pharmacist, health visitor, midwife or GP.

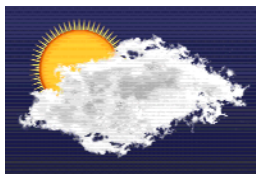
## Why is vitamin D important?

Vitamin D helps to regulate the amount of calcium in the body. It is important for the development of strong and healthy bones and teeth.

Low levels of vitamin D in children can lead to rickets which causes the bones to become curved or 'bow-legged'. In adulthood, low levels of vitamin D can lead to osteomalacia which causes bone pain and tenderness.

## Where does vitamin D come from?

### From the sun



Nearly all of the vitamin D we get is made in the skin by Ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun. In the UK it is

only between April and September that we get enough sunlight at the correct wavelength for our bodies to make the required amount of vitamin D. People with darker skin need more time in the sun to produce enough vitamin D.

## From our diet



It is difficult to get enough vitamin D from food alone, however it is found in small amounts in some foods.

The main food source of vitamin D is oily fish\* such as salmon, mackerel, sardines and trout. Eggs and meat only contain a small amount of vitamin D. Some margarine is fortified with vitamin D, as is infant formula.

\* Note: you should not have more than two portions of oily fish a week if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

## Who needs vitamin D?

Everyone needs vitamin D but some people are more at risk of low levels of vitamin D than others.

## Pregnant or breastfeeding women

Pregnant women need to get enough vitamin D to keep their bones healthy and to provide their babies with enough vitamin D to support them while in the womb and in their first few months.

Babies get vitamin D from breast milk and rely on their mother's stores, especially if they are exclusively breastfeeding.

### **Children under 5 years**

Particularly those with darker skintones.

### **People over 65 years**

As you grow older your skin is less able to produce enough vitamin D from the sun.

### **People with dark skin**

If you have darker skin, it absorbs less sunlight than in people with lighter skin.

### **People with little sun exposure**

If you cover your skin for cultural reasons, are housebound or stay indoors for long periods of time, you may not get enough vitamin D from the sunlight alone.

### **People who are obese**

People who are obese are at higher risk of having low vitamin D levels.

## **How do I get the vitamin D that I need?**

It is important for people at risk to take vitamin D supplements, which are available at most pharmacies.

Adults at risk of low levels of vitamin D need about 10 micrograms of vitamin D every day to keep their levels topped up.

Ask your pharmacist about the vitamin D products for adults and children recommended by the NHS.

## Further information

For more information on the free vitamin D service visit the following links:

[www.lambeth.gov.uk/freeD](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/freeD)

[www.southwark.gov.uk/freeD](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/freeD)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about free vitamin D supplements, please contact:

Community Children's Nutrition & Dietetics Service on one of the following numbers:

- 020 3049 5392
- 020 3049 5383
- 020 3049 5051

(Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas'

**t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

## NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

## NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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