

# Vitamin D 0-5 years

Centre for Community Child Health

November 2014



**As your child grows and develops, one of the things they need is vitamin D. In our bodies, vitamin D helps us to make use of the calcium that we eat to grow strong bones and muscles.**

Our bodies make vitamin D in response to skin exposure to the sun's UV rays. More than 80% of our vitamin D needs come from the sun, while the rest comes from foods such as fortified dairy products, eggs and oily fish.

When you were pregnant and breastfeeding, you shared vitamin D with your baby. If your baby was formula-fed, most formula is fortified with vitamin D.

Where you live in Australia and the time of year has a big effect on the levels of vitamin D you can get from sun exposure - Darwin and Hobart are very different climates! It's always important to be careful in the sun no matter your location or the time of year. Between 10am and 4pm, if children are outdoors they should always wear a hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, clothing that keeps the sun off, and have access to plenty of shade and water.

If you're concerned about your or your child's vitamin D, it's important to talk to your GP about getting tested and possible supplementation. If vitamin D levels are just a little low, it can be a matter of getting a bit more outdoor time. If deficiency is severe, there may be a need for supplements.

#### Learn more

Keeping an eye on the UV forecast in your area each day is a good idea - the Bureau of Meteorology makes that information available every day for different parts of Australia. [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)

SunSmart has a great Vitamin D Tracker on their website - also available as an app for smartphones and tablets - that can be used as a simple way to track how much sun exposure is needed in your area for your skin type. [www.sunsmart.com.au](http://www.sunsmart.com.au)

You can also read more about vitamin D and kids on the Raising Children Network. <http://raisingchildren.net.au>

#### Centre for Community Child Health

The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne  
EMAIL [publications.ccch@rch.org.au](mailto:publications.ccch@rch.org.au)  
[www.rch.org.au/ccch/growthrive](http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/growthrive)