

Vitamin D for the Breastfed Baby

Human milk contains very little Vitamin D, ranging between 5-20 IU per liter. While many adults can get adequate amounts of Vitamin D from regular, limited exposure to sunlight, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) warns against subjecting infants to direct sunlight. The AAP says that factors such as the amount of pigment in your baby's skin and skin exposure affect how much vitamin D is produced by his or her body from sunlight, and that exposing infants and children's skin to sunlight has been shown to increase the risk for skin cancer later in life. The AAP recommends that infants and young children not be in direct sunlight when they are outside, particularly infants younger than six months of age. The AAP goes on to say that sunscreens should be used on all children when in sunlight, and sunscreen prevents the absorption of vitamin D.

This has prompted the AAP to recommend Vitamin D supplementation for all breastfed infants starting at two months of age through 12 months. Currently, the only way to supplement babies directly with vitamin D is with vitamin drops that also contain other vitamins. These drops are available over the counter.

There is current research being performed at the Medical University of South Carolina focused on supplementing the breastfeeding mother directly with Vitamin D to avoid supplementing the baby directly. In theory if mom takes additional Vitamin D and her blood level is monitored, she may be able to provide the necessary Vitamin D for her baby. However, this study has not yet been completed, so it is prudent to follow the AAP recommendations.

Resources: <http://www.aap.org/family/vitdpatients.htm>