Why is vitamin D important?

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

Not getting enough vitamin D can cause bone aches and pains in adults and lead to bone deformities such as rickets in children.

Where does vitamin D come from?

Most vitamin D is produced on the skin by UV light from the sun during spring and summer, only a small amount comes from our diet.

From the sun:
Most people will get enough vitamin D by going outside regularly for few minutes at midday, exposing their face and arms to the sun without sunscreen.

The time needed in the sun to make enough vitamin D is different for every person and depends on skin colour, time of day and time of the year. People with dark skin need more time in the sun to produce enough vitamin D. Whatever your skin type you don't need to sunbathe, the amount of sun you need is less than the amount needed for tanning or burning.

Whatever your skin type, your skin does not need to go red to get enough vitamin D from the sun. Avoid tanning or burning as this is the main cause of skin cancer. The longer you stay in the sun without protection the greater the risk of skin cancer.

From our food:
Although the main source is the sun, we can get some vitamin D from the foods we eat. Vitamin D is also found in oily fish (salmon, sardines and mackerel),* meat and eggs, fortified formula milk, cereals, soya products and margarine. Vegetarian or vegan diets can increase your risk of vitamin D deficiency.

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

Protect yourself and your children from the sun. Stay covered up and use sunscreen (with a high UVB factor) for most of the time you spent outside and before the skin starts to change colour.

Who needs vitamin D?

Everyone needs vitamin D but some people (like those listed below), may be more at risk of not having enough.

Pregnant or breastfeeding women
Pregnant women need 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 mothers' stores especially if they are exclusively breastfed. It is important to take a vitamin D supplement during pregnancy and while you are breastfeeding.

People with little sun exposure
If you cover your skin for cultural reasons, are housebound or stay indoors for long periods you may not get enough vitamin D from sunlight alone.

People with dark skin
If you have dark skin, your skin absorbs less UV light than people with lighter skin.

Children under 5 years
Particularly those with dark skin tones.

People over 65
As you grow older your skin is less able to produce enough vitamin D from the sun.

People with some chronic diseases
Some long term illnesses or medications may result in low vitamin D. Speak to your GP for further advice.

If you or your child are at risk of vitamin D deficiency and you are worried about symptoms such as muscle aches and bone pains please seek advice from your GP.

How do I get the vitamin D that I need?

It is important for people at risk to take a supplement. Over the counter preparations of vitamin D are available to buy at most pharmacies or health food shops.

People at risk of not getting enough vitamin D need about 400 IU per day of vitamin D a day to keep their levels topped up.

Ask your pharmacist about the vitamin D products for adults and children recommended by the NHS locally. These products contain your daily vitamin D requirements.

Am I eligible for FREE vitamin D supplements?

Women and children from families who are eligible for the Government's Healthy Start scheme can get **free** vitamin supplements which include vitamin D, in the form of tablets for women and drops for children. Healthy Start vitamins contain the right concentration of vitamin D recommended for pregnant women and children. In Hillingdon they are available from the Hillingdon children's centres*.
Visit the website at www.healthystart.nhs.uk or ask your GP/midwife or health visitor for advice.

Vitamin D products available locally:

These can be bought from pharmacies (chemists) or health food shops. Some examples of supplements are listed below but other supplements are also available.

Product	Strength[1]	Size
Holland & Barrett[2]	400 IU	100
Morrison[3]	400 IU	90
Boots[4]	500 IU	90
HealthAid	500 IU	60
Boots[4]	1000 IU	90
Valupak	1000 IU	60
Vitabiotics	1000 IU	96
HealthAid	1000 IU	30
Holland & Barrett[2]	1000 IU	100
Lamberts	1000 IU	120

[1] IU = international units
[2] Only available at Holland & Barrett
[3] Only available at Morrison Supermarkets
[4] Only available at Boots the Chemists

Usually 400 IU per day will provide you with enough vitamin D however you may need a higher strength. Before buying a higher strength, please speak to your pharmacist or GP as monitoring may be required.

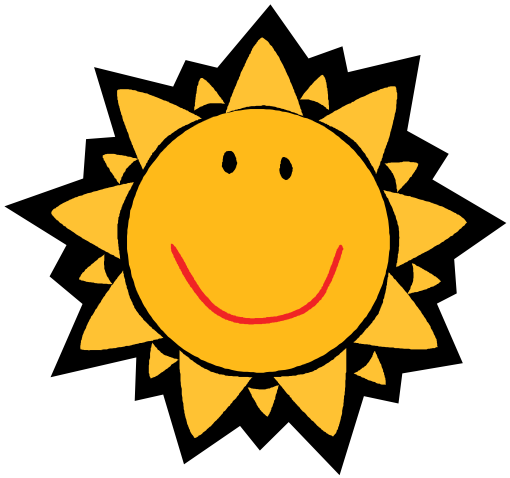
***London Borough of Hillingdon Children's Centres**

Barra Hall Children's Centre Wood End Green Road, Hayes, UB3 2SA
Belmore Children's Centre Owen Road, Hayes UB4 9LF
Charville Children's Centre Bury Avenue, Hayes UB4 8LF
Cherry Lane Children's Centre Sipson Road, West Drayton, UB7 9DL
Colham Manor Children's Centre Violet Avenue, Hillingdon UB8 3PT
Cornerstone Children's Centre Yiewsley Baptist Church, Colham Avenue, Yiewsley UB7 8HF
Coteford Children's Centre Fore Street, Pinner HA5 2HX
Cowley St Laurence Children's Centre Worcester Road, Cowley UB8 3TH
Harefield Children's Centre High Street, Harefield UB8 6BT
Hillside Children's Centre Northwood Way, Northwood HA6 1RX
McMillan Early Childhood Centre Judge Heath Lane, Hayes UB3 2PB
Nestles Avenue Children's Centre Nestles Avenue, Hayes UB3 4QA
Oak Farm Children's Centre Windsor Avenue, Hillingdon UB10 9PD
Pinkwell Children's Centre Pinkwell Lane, Hayes, UB3 1PG
Oak Farm Children's Centre Windsor Avenue, Hillingdon UB10 9PD
Pinkwell Children's Centre Pinkwell Lane, Hayes, UB3 1PG
South Ruislip Children's Centre Queens Walk, South Ruislip, HA4 0LR
Uxbridge Children's Centre Whitehall Road Uxbridge, UB8 2LX.
Uxbridge College Children's Centre Hayes Campus, College Way, Coldharbour Lane, Hayes
Yeading Children's Centre Carlyon Road, Hayes UB4 0NR

NHS
Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Group

Vitamin D

What is it? Who needs it? Why is it important?



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