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Health:

Vitamin D Deficiency: Is My Child at Risk?

By Katherine Pennington,
Holistic Health Counselor &
Founder of [Be in Balance](#)

With all of the rumblings in the media about vitamin D deficiency becoming an epidemic, it is a concern—especially in big cities in the East such as New York where there are cold, dark winters, and whose children may be indoors more. Some 60% of Americans are said now to be vitamin D deficient.

Vitamin D is part of the steroid hormone family that includes cortisol, estrogen, progesterone and testosterone. It is contained in egg yolks, cold water fish, shiitake mushrooms, cod liver oil and vitamin D fortified foods such as milk (now even some rice and soy milks are fortified,) orange juice, and cereals. Vitamin D is created by our bodies when the sun directly hits our skin. It is very hard to get adequate levels of vitamin D solely through our diets, especially if we live in darker areas.

Vitamin D deficiency has been associated with poor bone health (like rickets,) heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes, depression, high blood pressure, arthritis, autoimmune disorders, and obesity. It often remains undiagnosed because the symptoms are so hard to pinpoint the deficiency. To test for vitamin-D, you can take a blood test called the 25-hydroxy test. The optimal result should be above 35 ng/ml.

So, what do I do to prevent vitamin D deficiency? Of course, diet is important, so be sure to eat vitamin D filled or fortified foods, or take a supplement. But, it is equally important that you get adequate amounts of time outside in the sunlight! Experts recommend that we get at least 15-20 minutes of time in the sun per day. If you are at your desk all day, get out and take a walk and bask in the sun or just take a walk around the block. Make sure your children get a lot of time outside as well.

If you live in the Northeast where it is darker or do not get outside enough, then it is essential that you take extra steps to ensure that you and your children are getting adequate levels of vitamin D!

There is no right or wrong answer and you must do what feels right to you! For more information, please contact Katherine at Katherine@be-n-balance.com.

Education:

Developmental Milestones

Heather Schrempf White, M.S.,
Ed., Educational Director,
[Brain Builders Tutoring](#)

From time to time, a teacher may talk about developmental milestones. What are developmental milestones and what do they have to do with your child's progress in school?

A child's brain is not fully formed until they are well into their teens. The development of skills and perceptions grows fastest in the first few years of life, but the brain continues to develop areas like self-control and the ability to do abstract reasoning into the high school years.

Scientists like Jean Piaget have studied childhood development and have found that every child goes through the same growth process. Babies playing with a favorite toy may act as though it has disappeared if it is put under a pillow. At a later time, your baby will lift up the pillow to get the toy. Somewhat older children, when asked to choose, will choose a larger number of coins over a few more valuable coins. They may also choose a nickel over a dime because it is physically larger. At some point, though, they will recognize that a quarter is worth more than 5 pennies and a dime is worth more than a nickel.

Children develop these thinking and reasoning skills in a consistent sequence, but each child develops at his/her unique pace. One child may know all of the letter sounds at age 4. Another may not be able to name letter sounds until they are 5 or 6. There is no evidence, though, that later development corresponds to intelligence or progress in school. Studies suggest that early readers, for example, do not end up materially ahead of late readers in school.

When should you consider intervening? As a general rule, if your child seems to be lagging behind at age 4, there may be nothing to worry about. If the same child is struggling at age 8, though, you may want to consider seeking professional advice.

Nevertheless, if you feel your child is way behind others or find yourself worrying about their ability to learn, consult a knowledgeable professional for advice regardless of their age. You know your child better than anyone else can.

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