

Background information

Community practitioners are best placed to advise parents and pregnant women about the importance of vitamin D supplementation.

Public Health England (PHE) changed its guidance on Vitamin D in July 2016 in light of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) publication 'Vitamin D and Health' (SACN, 2016). NICE guidance on vitamin D is due to be reviewed in 2017.

Please see the following link for the PHE press release: [PHE publishes new advice on vitamin D - Press releases - GOV.UK](#)

Follow this link for information on NHS Choices [Vitamins and minerals - Vitamin D - NHS Choices](#)

Vitamin D is essential for healthy bones, teeth and muscles due to its role in regulating the absorption of calcium and phosphorus in the diet. Vitamin D is primarily acquired from the action of sunlight on the skin; small amounts of vitamin D are obtained from foods. During the winter months sunlight is insufficient to maintain the recommended serum concentration of 25(OH) D, particularly in the population who are at increased risk of Vitamin D deficiency (SACN, 2016). In view of this it is recommended the whole UK population consider taking Vitamin D supplements (See pathway).

Those most at risk of Vitamin D deficiency:

- Infants and children under 5
- Pregnant and breastfeeding women, particularly teenagers and young women
- People over 65
- People who have low or no exposure to the sun
- People with darker skin

(NICE, 2014)

Statement on vitamin D supplementation for breastfed babies from UNICEF UK Baby Friendly initiative

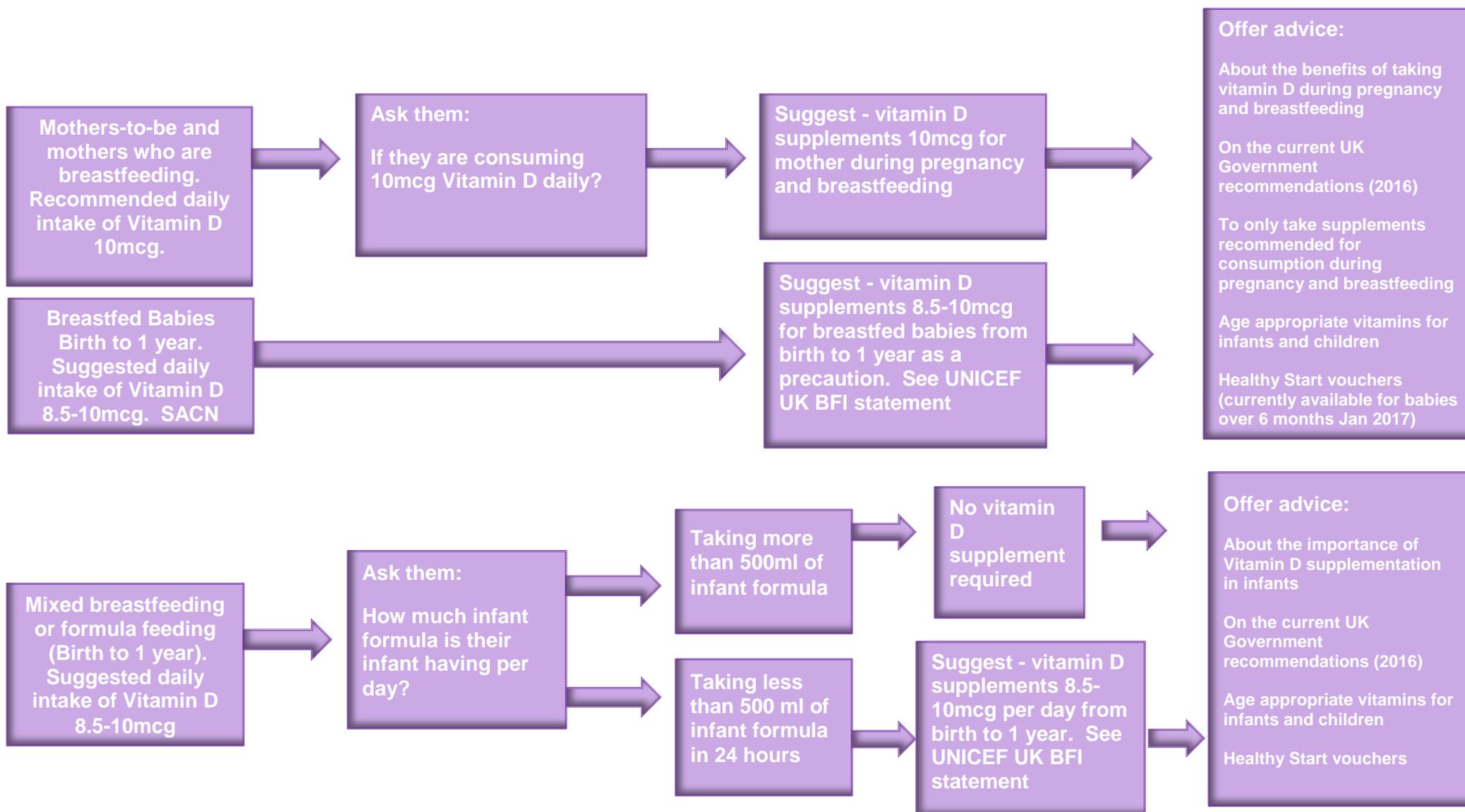
In November 2016 we updated our statement on Vitamin D supplementation in light of new recommendations from The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition for the whole population, including new-born babies. It is now recommended that everyone over one year of age should take a 10µg/d vitamin D supplement daily and, as a precaution, breastfed babies from birth up to one year of age also be given a supplement of 8.5 to 10µg/d vitamin D per day. Babies who are formula fed do not require vitamin D if they are having 500ml/day of infant formula or more, as infant formula already has added vitamin D. <https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/guidance-for-health-professionals/statements/>

References

- NHS, 2016, The new guidelines on Vitamin D, what you need to know. www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vitamins-minerals/Pages/Vitamin-D.aspx
- NICE, 2014. Vitamin D: increasing supplement use in at risk groups, Public health guidelines (PH56), London, NICE.
- SACN, 2016. Vitamin D and Health, www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-committee-on-nutrition

Vitamin D Pathway January 2017

Consider the following pathways when speaking to mothers at antenatal / primary and other subsequent visits.



Children aged
1-4 years-
suggested
daily intake of
Vitamin D is
10mcg

Population
aged 4 and
over
recommended
daily intake of
Vitamin D is 10
mcg

Ask parents:

If they are aware of the
importance of continuing
to supplement their
child's diet with Vitamin
D?

Suggest:

Vitamin D
supplement up
to 10mcg daily

Offer advice:

That children need sufficient vitamins to ensure
healthy growth and development during the
first five years when nutritional needs are
highest.

That vitamin D needs cannot be met by diet
alone and supplements are advised.

Where/how vitamin supplements can be
obtained

Healthy Start vouchers

On foods rich with vitamin D, including fortified
foods and their role.

On the benefits of safe sun exposure.

Ensure correct and age appropriate
supplement is being taken.

Foods rich in vitamin D (provide small amounts of vitamin D:

Oily fish, red meat, liver, egg yolks

Fortified foods:

Breakfast cereals, fat spreads, infant formula milk (formula fed babies only)