

Vitamins in Pregnancy

Do I need extra vitamins (vitamin supplements) when I am pregnant?

Vitamins are needed for growth and development. Apart from vitamin D, which we get from sunlight, most vitamins come from our diet. In the UK, it is quite common for people to be low in vitamin D and folic acid (vitamin B9). These vitamins are important in pregnancy and you can boost your levels by taking a vitamin supplement. Supplements of other vitamins are not usually advised since they may actually be harmful in pregnancy.

Vitamins that are recommended in pregnancy

• Folic acid

Folic acid is one of the B vitamins and helps to reduce the risk of your baby having spina bifida. Taking extra folic acid may also reduce the risk of heart or limb defects and some childhood brain tumours. The recommended daily dose is 400 micrograms (μg). Ideally, you should start taking extra folic acid before you conceive and continue to take it until you reach your 13th week of pregnancy. If you did not take folic acid before you became pregnant, start taking it as soon as you realise you are expecting a baby. Some women take a higher dose of folic acid. Why? If your risk of having a baby with spina bifida is higher than normal, you will be advised to take a daily dose of 5 milligrams (mg) of folic acid. This is higher than usual and it will need to be prescribed by a doctor.

You may be advised to take an increased dose if:

- you have had a previous pregnancy affected by spina bifida
- you or your partner have spina bifida
- you are taking certain medications for epilepsy
- you have coeliac disease or diabetes 4
- your BMI is 30 or more
- you have sickle-cell anaemia or thalassaemia; the higher dose of folic acid will also help to prevent and treat anaemia if you are in this situation.

• Vitamin D

All pregnant women are advised to take a daily dose of 10 micrograms (μg) of vitamin D (=400 iu) when pregnant and breastfeeding. This is because it is common in the UK for people to have low levels of vitamin D. Taking supplements can improve your baby's growth during his or her first year of life, and can reduce their risk of developing rickets.



Chorlton Family Practice

Chorlton Family Practice

Chorlton Health Centre
1 Nicolas Road
Manchester, M21 9NJ

📞 0161 881 4545

✉️ cmccg.chorltonfamilypractice@nhs.net

🐦 @ChorltonFPGP

🌐 www.chorltonfamilypractice.nhs.uk

You are at particular risk of having low levels of vitamin D if:

- your family origin is South Asian, African, Caribbean or Middle Eastern
- your BMI is 30 or more
- you stay indoors a lot
- you usually cover your skin when you go outdoors or usually use sun-protection cream
- your diet is low in vitamin D-rich foods such as eggs, meat, vitamin D-fortified margarine or breakfast cereal.
- If you are in one of these situations, you may be may be advised to take a higher daily dose of vitamin D.