



Practical help and information  
on nutrition and development

# PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 19 June 2012

## Brand new expert advice on preventing vitamin D deficiency in toddlers

### How to avoid preventable diseases like rickets in the under threes

The Infant & Toddler Forum (ITF) - leading experts in early years nutrition and development - has launched brand new best practice guidelines on meeting toddlers' vitamin D needs.

['Preventing Vitamin D Deficiency in Toddlers'](#) provides easy-to-follow, peer-reviewed guidance to provide clarity for healthcare professionals (HCPs) and families around this important nutritional issue.

Vitamin D is essential for good bone health and although recognition of its importance is increasing, more awareness is needed about meeting children's needs in the early years for its benefits to have the best chance for their long-term health. The re-emergence of diseases like rickets - thought to have disappeared at the beginning of the last century - is a key public health concern in the UK and this expert advice on foods, sunlight and supplements could not have come at a better time.

Professional guidance is vital in tackling the problem, by giving parents and carers practical tips on ensuring the vitamin D requirements of infants and toddlers are met. This was highlighted in the UK's Chief Medical Officers' recent letter to GPs, health visitors and community nurses, calling on them to tackle the confusion by making those at risk of deficiency aware of how important it is to get enough vitamin D, and therefore make a significant difference to people's health.

Dr Atul Singhal, Professor of Paediatric Nutrition at the UCL Institute of Child Health and Chair of the ITF, says: *"Vitamin D deficiency is serious but avoidable, and clear, trustworthy guidance is what's needed. Because exposure to sunlight and diet don't always provide enough vitamin D, the Department of Health and NICE recommend that pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants, and toddlers take a daily supplement. However, statistics show low awareness and uptake of supplements among HCPs and parents (1) and there seems to be a lot of confusion around ensuring toddlers get enough vitamin D. Our new guidance aims to address this significant issue."*

Nick Bishop, Professor of Paediatric Bone Disease at the University of Sheffield and Director of Children's Clinical Research Facility Sheffield Children's Hospital, was one of the peer reviewers for the ITF's Factsheet. He says: *"There is significant variation in the advice being given and the complexity of the advice is confusing for both healthcare professionals and the public as well. This Factsheet offers excellent guidance for all healthcare professionals working with families to give appropriate advice in line with the government recommendations, including advice on the role of diet and outdoor play."*

Download *'Preventing Vitamin D Deficiency in Toddlers'*: [Factsheet for HCPs](#) and [Guidance & Tips for parents](#)

ENDS

If you have press office enquiries, please contact Claire Johnson on 020 8971 6419 or [cjohnson@saycomms.co.uk](mailto:cjohnson@saycomms.co.uk)

#### Notes to editors

1. 58% of HCPs agree that they don't have sufficient information about strategies other than vitamin supplementation to increase vitamin levels in the under-5s and 63% of parents not including fortified foods in their child's diet are not doing so due to lack of information.



Practical help and information  
on nutrition and development

Feeding for Life Foundation. MIND THE GAP: are the current vitamin recommendations meeting the needs of the under-5s in the UK? Available from

[http://www.feedingforlifefoundation.co.uk/media/21951/feeding%20for%20life%20report\\_2012\\_web\\_singles.pdf](http://www.feedingforlifefoundation.co.uk/media/21951/feeding%20for%20life%20report_2012_web_singles.pdf)

2. The Infant & Toddler Forum is an independent group of experts in child health, nutrition and development. The Forum was formed to provide health and childcare professionals with educational resources that translate the evidence base into clear health messages for parents, and to facilitate interaction, learning and the sharing of best practice between healthcare professionals. For over six years the Forum and its partners have strived to raise awareness and promote positive change in the field of toddler nutrition and feeding behaviour.
3. The Infant & Toddler Forum is supported by an educational grant from Danone UK. All resources produced by the Forum represent the independent views of the Forum with whom copyright rests.