



March 12, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

Breastfeeding? Take Vitamin D

To recap the week, breastfed infants do not appear to be getting enough vitamin D. Neither the moms nor the infants are exposed to enough sunlight to make their own vitamin D, especially in winter. Moms who breastfeed and don't supplement their infants with vitamin D don't have adequate amounts of vitamin D in their breast milk. That leaves a logical question: what happens if the moms supplement their diet with vitamin D? Two recent studies asked that very question.

In the first study, Australian researchers gave pregnant women either a placebo, 1,000 IU vitamin D3, or 2,000 IU vitamin D3 every day commencing at the 27th week of pregnancy through the birth of the child (1). They checked the vitamin D levels from the mothers who volunteered to provide breast milk samples at two weeks and two months post-partum. Vitamin D levels in the breast milk of women who took 2,000 IU per day were higher than those who took the placebo or 1,000 IU. More appears to be better.



But is that enough vitamin D in the breast milk for the baby?

In the second study, researchers recruited breast feeding mothers from Western New York and South Carolina (2). They gave one group of women 400 IU vitamin D3 and the infant 400 IU beginning four to six weeks after birth. The other two groups were given 2,400 IU and 6,400 IU to the mothers and a placebo for the babies. The 2,400 IU portion of the study was stopped early because the vitamin D levels of the babies stayed below an adequate level. For those moms who breastfed through seven months, there were no differences between the vitamin D levels between the infants who were supplemented with vitamin D and the mother's who took 6,400 IU vitamin D. While it was a small study, it does give us insight.

The simplest solution if a woman breastfeeds is to give the baby liquid vitamin D as soon as the pediatrician recommends, which normally is right after birth. For some reason, women seem to resist that path based on the questions I get. An alternative would be for a woman to supplement her diet with 6,000 IU of vitamin D3 while breastfeeding after discussing it with her pediatrician. Blood levels of vitamin D should be checked if this approach is used. The last study was small so the amounts and duration are not clearly defined, but we know vitamin D3, even in amounts a lot higher than those used in the studies, has had no negative effects.

What about when a woman stops breastfeeding? I think the research is pretty clear: give the infant 400 IU vitamin D3 every day. It can be part of a liquid multi or a stand-alone supplement. For healthy bones and immune system, I think it's the safe and smart thing to do. Riley does, too.

Don't forget the [Lyme Disease](#) webinar is on Wednesday. Reserve your slot today.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

References:

1. Am J Clin Nutr. 2016 Feb;103(2):382-8.
2. Pediatrics. 2015 Oct;136(4):625-34.



Straight Talk on Health

Hear Dr. Chet's take on the latest health news and research—listen to *Straight Talk on Health* Sunday at 7:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. in the Eastern Time Zone on WGUV-FM 88.5 or 95.3, or listen live via the Internet by going to www.wgvu.org/wgvunews and clicking on "Listen Live" at the top.

The health information in this message is designed for educational purposes only. It's not a substitute for medical advice from your healthcare provider, and you should not use it to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. It's designed to motivate you to work toward better health, and that includes seeing your healthcare professional regularly. If what you've read raises any questions or concerns about health problems or possible diseases, talk to your healthcare provider today.

Subscribe to the Message from Dr. Chet at DrChet.com — © Chet Zelasko PhD LLC