

# Children's Health



## Growing Bones Need Vitamin D

(NAPSA)—Children need vitamin D for strong bones and muscles. While some can be found in food, the nutrient is mostly made by your body when your skin is exposed to sunlight. A vitamin D deficiency can hurt a child's musculoskeletal system, according to the U.S. Bone and Joint Initiative.

"A vitamin D deficiency in growing children can keep their bones from growing straight or it can make bones too weak to support a child's body weight, resulting in broken bones," explained Ellen Raney, M.D., of Shriners Hospitals for Children—Portland.

### Symptoms

Severe vitamin D deficiency is becoming prevalent, however. Signs include growth that's severely stunted, arms and legs that don't grow straight, and bones that are weak and easily broken.

### Why It Happens

There are a number of reasons:

- Decreased outdoor activities
- Constant use of sunscreen while outside
- Limited availability of vitamin D-rich foods. It's found in fish such as salmon and in cod liver oil and fortified foods such as milk, breakfast cereals and some brands of juice, yogurt or margarine. You want to look for foods with a Daily Value (DV) of 20 percent or more. A good diet is important but it may not be enough.

### What To Do

To help, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a daily intake of 400 IU a day of vitamin D during the first year of life beginning in the first few days of life. The Institute of Medicine says children and adolescents need a daily intake of at least 600 IU per day. Your doctor can deter-



**Vitamin D is essential to the body's ability to build and maintain healthy muscles and bones.**

mine the correct amount of vitamin D for your children and what, if any, changes to make to their diet.

Fortunately, vitamin D is readily available by itself in child-friendly forms, such as gummy vitamins or liquid and in children's multivitamins with 60 to 400 IU of vitamin D. Just remember, taking several multivitamins a day to get more vitamin D is not wise, as too much of other vitamins can be harmful.

### Help a Child You Know

Children with musculoskeletal problems can get help at Shriners Hospitals for Children. They change lives every day through innovative pediatric specialty care, world-class research and outstanding medical education. The nonprofit organization's 22 facilities in North America provide advanced care for children with orthopaedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate.

To refer a patient to Shriners Hospitals for Children, call (800) 237-5055. You can also e-mail [patientreferrals@shrinenet.org](mailto:patientreferrals@shrinenet.org) to get a referral started.

### Learn More

Find out more at [www.shrinershospitals.org](http://www.shrinershospitals.org).