

[IMAGE]

Dodge Diabetes with D

Type 1 diabetes is a condition in which the body does not properly produce or utilize insulin, a hormone that helps us digest the food we eat. People with type 1 diabetes (usually children) experience a build-up of blood sugar that passes out of their body in their urine, draining the fuel they need.

As a result, diabetics must regulate their bodies' insulin levels through careful monitoring and injections of the hormone. Infants' diets can affect their likelihood of developing type 1 diabetes later, and studies have suggested that adequate vitamin D intake may help prevent diabetes.

The purpose of a recent study in *The Lancet* was to determine if infant vitamin D deficiency is linked with the onset of type 1 diabetes. The mothers of over 10,000 children in Finland completed a questionnaire to determine vitamin D intake.

Infants who received the Finnish minimum recommended daily intake of 2,000 international units (IU) of vitamin D were 80% less likely to develop type 1 diabetes over 30 years than those with lower vitamin intakes. Current guidelines in America only recommend providing 200 IU of vitamin D to infants daily.

Why do Americans require less vitamin D? Due to the geographic location of Finland (a far northern latitude), the country's inhabitants receive little sunlight. The sun stimulates a chemical reaction in the body that creates vitamin D, so individuals in Finland synthesize less vitamin D in their own bodies than individuals who receive ample sunlight on their skin regularly, justifying the higher supplementation recommendations.

Be sure your baby receives adequate vitamin D in the first year, but don't exceed the guidelines: Excessive levels of vitamin D are potentially toxic. For most children and adults, just 15-20 minutes of sunlight on the face or arms two to three times per week is enough to provide the body with adequate vitamin D. Foods containing high amounts of vitamin D include vitamin D-fortified milk, eggs, and fish.

Reference:

Hypponen E, Laara E, Reunanen A, et al. Intake of vitamin D and risk of type 1 diabetes: A birth-cohort study. *The Lancet* 2001;358, pp. 1500-1503.

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