

[IMAGE]

Vitamin A for Low-Birth-Weight Infants

Nothing can be more heart-wrenching to a mother and father than watching their newborn child from the confines of an incubator. Low-birth-weight infants can suffer from chronic lung disease, intracranial hemorrhaging, infections and numerous other complications that make their first few days a literal struggle for life.

A study of 807 extremely low-birth-weight infants (weighing less than 2 1/2 pounds and requiring respiratory support within 24 hours of birth) assessed the potential for vitamin A to improve their chances for survival. Infants were divided into an intervention group and a control group, with the former group receiving intramuscular injections of vitamin A (5,000 IU) three days a week for four weeks.

By 36 weeks, the overall incidence of complications, namely chronic lung disease or death, was significantly lower in the vitamin A group (55%) compared with the control group (62%). The most pointed observation was that one additional infant survived without chronic lung disease for every 14-15 infants who received vitamin A supplementation.

If you're expecting a child, consult your team of health care professionals regularly to ensure that your pregnancy and childbirth go as smoothly as possible. Following appropriate nutritional and exercise guidelines can help keep you and your newborn healthy and happy.

Reference:

Tyson JE, Wright LL, Oh W, et al. Vitamin A supplementation for extremely low birth weight infants. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, June 24, 1999: Vol. 340, No. 25, pp1962-68.

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