

March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010

*Vitamin D deficiency early in life is associated with rickets, a disorder characterized by soft bones. New research has shown that despite taking a prenatal vitamin, vitamin D deficiency is very common in pregnant women and newborn infants. Higher-dose supplementation and increased sun exposure is needed to improve maternal and infant vitamin D status.*

## VITAMIN D DEFICIENCIES WIDESPREAD AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN & INFANTS DESPITE PRENATAL VITAMIN USAGE

Even among those taking prenatal multivitamin supplements, vitamin D levels were found to be insufficient or deficient in pregnant women, particularly in women living in northern regions, according to research published in the Journal of Nutrition. Researchers took blood samples from 400 pregnant women—200 African American women and 200 Caucasian women—before 22 weeks gestation and again after delivery.

More than 80% of African American women and nearly half of Caucasian women tested at delivery had levels of vitamin D that were insufficient, even though more than 90% of them used prenatal vitamins during pregnancy.

In addition, umbilical cord blood from newborns showed 92.4% of African American babies and 66.1% of Caucasian infants had insufficient vitamin D levels at birth, leaving them at risk for rickets and other health problems. A newborn relies completely on its mother for its vitamin D stores.

These results suggest that African American and Caucasian pregnant women and newborns residing in the northern U.S. are at high risk of vitamin D insufficiency, even when mothers regularly take prenatal vitamins. Higher-dose supplementation is needed to improve maternal and infant vitamin D status.

< J. Nutr. 137:447-452, February 2007. >