

Going home from the neonatal unit on vitamins (Abidec)

Information for patients, parents and guardians

You have been given this factsheet because your baby has been prescribed vitamins A,B,C and D.

Babies who are born at less than 36 weeks or who have a birth weight less than 2.5kg (5.5lb) require extra vitamins during their first year of life because the stores of vitamins in their bodies are low.

The brand name of the vitamins prescribed in the neonatal unit is Abidec.

Why is it important for my baby to take this medicine?

Vitamins are essential for health and development. Breast milk and formula contain some vitamins, but not enough for a growing premature baby.

Are there any side effects?

When given at the advised doses vitamins are unlikely to cause any side effects. If however you think your baby is reacting to the vitamins, or has any other worrying symptoms while taking them, seek medical advice.

Some babies will 'gag' due to the taste of the vitamins. If you are experiencing any problems like this, please discuss them with your health visitor, GP or the neonatal team at your next appointment.

When should I give the vitamins?

Vitamins are given once a day. Try to give them about the same time every day, as part of your baby's routine.

How much should I give?

- Babies who are under 12 months and who are fed on breast milk, term formula (a name for standard formula that you can buy in supermarkets) or a prescribed hydrolysed formula should have 1ml per day of Abidec. (This is higher than the dose on the packet as premature babies need higher doses of vitamins, particularly vitamin D).
- Babies who are fed on Nutriprem 2 formula should have 0.6ml once a day as this formula contains extra vitamins.
- Babies who are over 12 months should have a standard dose of vitamins (Abidec or Healthy Start vitamins).

When should I start to give my baby vitamins?

Usually when your baby is 14 days old.

How should I store vitamins?

Keep the medicine in a cupboard away from heat and direct sunlight, and out of the sight and reach of children.

You must dispose of the bottle and any remaining contents four weeks after opening it. It's a good idea to make a note of the date you first open it.

Make sure the medicine has not reached its 'best before' or 'use by' date.

What if my baby vomits?

Wait until the next dose, and give the normal amount. Do not give a second or double dose.

What if I accidentally give too much?

Never give your baby a higher dose than has been prescribed. If you think you have given too much, call your GP or NHS 111.

How do I get more vitamins?

You will be given a bottle of vitamins when your baby is discharged from hospital, which will last four weeks. Once you are home you will need to contact your GP for a repeat prescription.

How long will my baby need vitamins?

Your baby will need vitamins (which should be available on prescription) until they are one year old.

The Department of Health recommends vitamins A, C and D for all children between the ages of one and five years old. These can be bought from shops, or you may be eligible for NHS Healthy Start children's vitamins. It is unlikely that your GP will continue prescribing vitamins once your baby is over one year old, unless they have a specific vitamin deficiency that needs treatment.

Contact us

If you have any questions or would like more information about anything in this factsheet, please contact the neonatal home team on telephone: 07766 994816 (available 7.30am to 5pm, and Saturday 9am to 5pm).

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone **023 8120 4688** for help.

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