Should Breastfeeding Women Take a Vitamin D Supplement?
By Marie L. Bosco, BSN, RNC, IBCLC
Private Practice Lactation Consultant, MI

Due to an increase in the rate of vitamin D deficiency in recent years, guidelines for supplementation of this vital micronutrient have been recently revised. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all breastfeeding newborns receive a supplemental daily dose of vitamin D 400 IU/d in order to prevent rickets; one of the many consequences of vitamin D deficiency is reduced calcium absorption. A combination of dietary intake of foods rich in vitamin D, such as fatty fish and enriched dairy products, in addition to regular periods of skin exposure to the sun should provide the body with an adequate supply. However, much of the US population is not exposed to enough sunlight to synthesize adequate vitamin D. Given that many adults are documented to be deficient of this important vitamin one might wonder if a breastfeeding mother should take a vitamin D supplement along with her multivitamin supplement.

Minimal research has been done in the arena which has left health care providers with little evidence to support or dismiss vitamin D supplementation in breastfeeding mothers. The Medical University of South Carolina designed a study looking at the effect of high-dose vitamin D supplementation on serum vitamin D levels and breast milk calcium concentration in lactating women. At
one month, postpartum breastfeeding mothers were given a daily dose of either
2000 IU or 4000 IU of vitamin D for three months, aimed at achieving optimal
vitamin D status with a serum concentration of 32 ng/ml. The 4000 IU group was
more effective in raising both maternal, infant, and breast milk vitamin D levels.
Taking this information into account, breastfeeding mothers and their infants will
likely benefit from a maternal supplement of vitamin D 4000 IU daily as well as
the established multivitamin with calcium.

Basile LA, Taylor SN, Wagner CL, Horst RL, Hollis BW. *The effect of high-dose vitamin D
supplementation on serum vitamin D levels and milk calcium concentration in lactating women and

Vitamin D Intake.* From American Academy of Pediatrics:
http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citapa.htm