

TO: the Editor, NYT  
RE: "Vitamin D Deficiency May Lurk in Babies."  
Science Section, August 26th 2008  
DATE: August 29, 2008

It is clear that vitamin D content of human milk is variable and directly related to maternal vitamin D status. Human milk is not deficient in vitamin D per se; rather, it is deficient in vitamin D when mother is deficient. Vitamin D transfer into mothers' milk is predictable: a deficient woman has little to transfer to her infant via her milk; if her status improves, transfer of vitamin D in her milk to the baby will also. Maternal vitamin D deficiency and resultant nutritional rickets in her nursing infant is preventable: supplementation of the infant with vitamin D will ameliorate deficiency in that age group, but does not address maternal needs.. Adverse effects associated with vitamin D deficiency affect bone development and innate immunity such that no woman and her baby should be deficient. We must prescribe a safe intervention that will achieve sufficiency in both mother and infant and not blame human milk as the culprit, but rather, see the problem as the larger public health issue that it is.

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