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Vitamin D is essential for normal growth and development in children, yet many children who are otherwise healthy may have inadequate blood levels of vitamin D. A vitamin D deficiency in childhood may lead to muscle weakness, defective bone mineralization, and rickets.

LOW LEVELS OF VITAMIN D ARE COMMON AMONG HEALTHY CHILDREN

A study recently published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that many children may be at risk for a vitamin D deficiency. Vitamin D is essential for normal growth, development, and immune function.

Researchers from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia assessed dietary and supplemental vitamin D intake, body mass, and blood levels of vitamin D in 382 healthy children (ages 6 to 21) living in the northeastern U.S. More than half of the children had low blood levels of vitamin D, with 55 percent having inadequate vitamin D blood levels and 68 percent having low blood levels of vitamin D in the wintertime. African Americans, children 9 and older, and those with low dietary vitamin D intake were most likely to have reduced serum vitamin D levels.

"The best indicator of a person's vitamin D status is the blood level of a vitamin D compound called 25-hydroxyvitamin D," the lead investigator noted. "Vitamin D deficiency remains an under-recognized problem overall, and is not well studied in children."

The researchers added that further study is needed to determine appropriate blood levels of vitamin D in children, and also suggested a review of the current recommendations for vitamin D intake.

< *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. July 2007. 86(1):150-8.>