

## Rickets

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Rickets is a disorder caused by a lack of vitamin D, calcium, or phosphate. It leads to softening and weakening of the bones. Infants who are breastfed only may develop vitamin D deficiency. Human breast milk does not supply the proper amount of vitamin D. This can be a particular problem for darker-skinned children in winter months (when there are lower levels of sunlight).

Not getting enough calcium and phosphorous in your diet can also lead to rickets. Rickets caused by a lack of these minerals in diet is rare in developed countries, because calcium and phosphorous are found in milk and green vegetables.

Your genes may increase your risk of rickets. Hereditary rickets is a form of the disease that is passed down through families. It occurs when the kidneys are unable to hold onto the mineral phosphate. Rickets may also be caused by kidney disorders that involve renal tubular acidosis.

During the Industrial Revolution, rickets appeared in epidemic form in temperate zones where the pollution from factories blocked the sun's ultraviolet rays. Thus, rickets was probably the first childhood disease caused by environmental pollution.

Rickets was common in the past, but it disappeared in the Western world during the early twentieth century thanks to the fortification with vitamin D of foods such as margarine and cereal. However, there has been an increase in cases of rickets in the UK in recent years.

The number of rickets cases is still relatively small-less than 900 cases were diagnosed in hospitals in England during 2012-but studies have shown that a significant number of people in the UK

1 have low levels of vitamin D in their blood.

2 Any child whose diet does not contain enough vitamin D or calcium  
3 can develop rickets, but the condition is more common in children with  
4 dark skin children born prematurely, and children taking medication  
5 that interferes with vitamin D.

6 Symptoms of rickets are as followed: bone pain, poor growth and  
7 deformities of the skeleton, such as bowed legs, curvature of the  
8 spine and thickening of the ankles, wrists and knees.

9 Rickets can easily be prevented by eating a diet that includes vitamin  
10 D and calcium, as well as spending some time in sunlight. The hands  
11 and face only need to be exposed to the sunlight for about 15  
12 minutes a few times a week during spring and summer to provide you  
13 with enough vitamin D.

14 Dr. Robert P. Schwartz, an endocrinologist at Wake Forest  
15 University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, N.C., lead author  
16 of the study, says "This is a disease that was here 100 years ago, is  
17 back."

18 Rickets has been assumed to be a disease in the past but it has  
19 never been truly eliminated. It is making a surge back and worrying  
20 many people. Rickets is rare in the U.S but it is still possible to get  
21 it. It is preventable.

22 Rickets can be treated by replacing the missing vitamin or mineral in  
23 your body. If you are deficient in vitamin D, your doctor will likely tell  
24 you to get more sun and eat foods high in vitamin D, such as: fish, milk,  
25 liver and eggs.

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