

# How to Administer Vitamin A to Children

Vitamin A deficiency is a major contributor to child mortality—its reduction is an essential element of child survival programs.



## Vitamin A helps to protect our health in several ways:<sup>1</sup>

- » Increases chance of survival among children under age 5
- » Reduces severity of infections
- » Promotes growth, protects eye sight and the eyes, prevents anemia

## Dosing Instructions:

### Vitamin A Dosing Schedule for Universal Distribution of Vitamin A: Children 6-59 Months of Age

| TARGET GROUP                 | DOSE                            | HOW OFTEN        |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Infants 6-11 months of age   | 100,000 IU, administered orally | Every 4-6 months |
| Children 12-59 months of age | 200,000 IU, administered orally | Every 4-6 months |

- Wash hands with soap and water.
- Ask the child or caretaker his or her age.
- Ask if the child has received a vitamin A capsule in the last one month. If yes, do not administer. If no, continue.
- Ask the caretaker to hold the child, and make sure the child is calm.
- Select the appropriate dose of vitamin A for the infant or child:
  - 50,000 IU to an infant less than 6 months of age,
  - 100,000 IU to an infant 6 - 11 months of age,
  - 200,000 IU to children 12 months of age and older
- Cut open the narrow end of each capsule with scissors and squeeze the correct amount of vitamin A into the child's mouth.
- Make sure that the infant or child swallows the content of the capsule and does not spit out any drops. Check if the child is comfortable after swallowing the drops.
- Place each used capsule in a plastic bag or container and clean hands with sanitizer.
- Place one tally mark on the tally sheet for each child given a dose of vitamin A; also record the dose on the child health card if available.<sup>2</sup>

### Albendazole/Mebendazole Dosing Schedule in Combination with Universal Distribution of Vitamin A: Children 6-59 Months of Age

| TARGET GROUP                 | Albendazole 400 mg | Mebendazole 500 mg |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Infants 6-11 months of age   | Do Not Give        | Do Not Give        |
| Children 12-23 months of age | 1/2 Tablet         | 1 Tablet           |
| Children 2-5 Years           | 1 Tablet           | 1 Tablet           |

*Albendazole can be chewed without water. If Mebendazole is used, provide clean drinking water for children.*

1. Pan American Health Organization (2001). *Providing vitamin A supplements through immunization and other health contacts for children 6-59 months and women up to 6 weeks postpartum: A guide for health workers*, Second Edition, pp. 7-8.  
 2. Source: *Micronutrient Initiative (2007). Vitamin A in child health weeks: A toolkit for planning, implementing, and monitoring*, p. 47

## Remember to Tell the Child's Parent/Caretaker:

- This is vitamin A
- Vitamin A helps keep your child strong and healthy
- Bring your child for another dose of vitamin A in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of month)

# Instructions for Distribution Supervisors

Vitamin A deficiency is a major contributor to child mortality—its reduction is an essential element of child survival programs.

## Vitamin A helps to protect our health in several ways:<sup>1</sup>

- » Increases chance of survival among children under age 5 (child mortality from all causes is reduced by 23-30%)
- » Reduces severity of infections, including measles, malaria, diarrhea and respiratory infections
- » Promotes growth, protects eye sight and the eyes, prevents anemia

### Distribution Checklist:

- Are there enough vitamin A capsules?
- Scissors to cut tip off of capsule
- A plastic bag or box to throw away used capsules
- Sanitizer or wipes to clean hands between children
- Child health card to give to parent or caretaker (if the child doesn't already have one)
- Tally sheet to record number of doses given



## Supervisors need to know:<sup>1</sup>

- Why give vitamin A?
- The effectiveness of vitamin A
- Possible side effects/safety of vitamin A
- How to identify target groups that need to receive vitamin A and de-worming
- How to distinguish between 100,000 iu and 200,000 iu capsules
- How to handle and store vitamin A capsules
- How to give 1/2 a capsule of 200,000 iu vitamin A to a child 6-11 months of age
- Important information to share with the parent/caretaker of the child
- How to record vitamin A on child health card and tally sheet

### Training for Health Workers:<sup>3</sup>

- Know how to determine the age of the child
- Know the appropriate dose of vitamin A and de-worming medicine to give to the child
- Know how to open, administer, and dispose of vitamin A capsules correctly
- Keep unused capsules out of direct sunlight
- Make sure the child is calm before receiving vitamin A or de-worming medicine
- Make sure the child swallows all vitamin A drops and is comfortable after receiving vitamin A and de-worming medicine
- Know how to record the dose given on the child's health card and tally sheet

1. Pan American Health Organization (2001). Providing vitamin A supplements through immunization and other health contacts for children 6-59 months and women up to 6 weeks postpartum: A guide for health workers, Second Edition, pp. 7-8.  
 2,3. Source: Micronutrient Initiative (2007). Vitamin A in child health weeks: A toolkit for planning, implementing, and monitoring, p. 47