

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

Info Sheet
April 2016

Recognizing Vitamin A Deficiency in Children

Liberty Galvin



Carrots
© M. Messner 2015



Kale
<http://bit.ly/2ewcDBH>

Families need to eat certain foods to help them stay strong, healthy, productive and smart. One important nutrient that some foods provide is vitamin A. When you don't get enough vitamin A from the foods you eat, you have trouble seeing at night and other vision problems, and you may become more vulnerable to other illnesses, such as diarrhea and measles. Children and pregnant women especially need vitamin A, and if they don't get it their health can be negatively affected forever, leaving them vulnerable to blindness and other life threatening diseases.

Symptoms for Vitamin A include the following:

- Difficulty seeing well (visual impairment)
- Night blindness
- Sick more often (weak immune system)
- Heart, lung, kidney problems happen regularly (chronic illness)

It is important to recognize the symptoms of not having enough vitamin A (also called deficiency). Sometimes it is difficult to tell if a child has a vitamin deficiency, or if there is another problem such as malaria. Family and community members can also guess if children are vitamin A deficient by knowing which foods that provide vitamin A are missing from the diet.

Foods rich in Vitamin A include:

- Leafy green vegetables (cassava leaf, sweet potato leaf, amaranth)
- Orange and yellow vegetables (carrots, squash, pumpkin)
- Orange and yellow fruits (mango, pawpaw, cantaloupe)
- Animal organs (liver, gizzards)
- Eggs and Dairy (milk, cheese yogurt)

By recognizing the symptoms, and knowing if these foods are missing from a child's diet, families can help ensure vitamin A is in their children's diet, allowing them to grow strong and live healthier lives.

References:

- “[Micronutrient Deficiencies, Vitamin A.](#)” World Health Organization.
“[Vitamin A: Fact Sheet for Consumers.](#)” National Institutes of Health (NIH), Office of Dietary Supplements.