

**Factors Influencing Vitamin A Supplementation Among Mothers of
Children Under Five Years Old Attending Mbagathi District
Hospital, Nairobi, Kenya**

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ABSTRACT

Vitamin A deficiency is a significant public health problem in Kenya. Studies have shown that Vitamin A supplementation is one of the best proven and most cost-effective interventions to improve vitamin A status and save children's lives. However, despite VAS being administered free of charge to all postnatal mothers and children 6-59 months in Kenya, the coverage remains low. The main objective of this study was to assess factors affecting practices and utilization of Vitamin A supplementation among mothers with children below five years attending Mbagathi District Hospital. This was a descriptive cross sectional hospital based study that utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods. It was conducted among mothers attending the hospitals' Maternal and Child Health Clinic and Paediatric Outpatient Department. A total of 158 respondents were interviewed. Quantitative data was analyzed using *Epi Info* statistical software while *NVIVO* software was used for thematic analysis of qualitative data. Majority (94%) of the respondents reported having heard about vitamin A supplementation, their major source of information being the health worker (82%). About a half (52%) of the respondents had their children up to date with VAS but less than a half (43%) of the mothers had received vitamin A after delivery. While 58% of the respondents were aware that the recommended schedule for VAS for children is every 6 months, 49% were aware vitamin A was given to mothers. All the respondents (100%) who had heard about VAS reported it was useful to children. There were no negative beliefs or attitudes mentioned. Three quarters of the respondents' children had missed the vitamin A capsule because they were either not aware of the schedule (41%) or had stopped coming to the clinic (34%). Most (91%) of the respondents had not encountered any problems/constraints with VAS services. In conclusion, mothers were very positive and supportive of VAS. However, the services were not adequately utilized due to lack of

information and awareness among both the health workers and the mothers. The awareness and utilization of VAS services was noted to increase with the level of education and was also high among the employed compared to the unemployed. I recommend regular refresher courses for all health workers to increase awareness of the entire VAS programme by the Ministry of Health. In addition, they should enhance information, education and communication pertaining to VAS services to raise public awareness and advocacy. Further research to evaluate other aspects of VAS programme should be carried out.