

# Vitamin K for Newborns

## **What is vitamin K?**

Vitamin K is used by our bodies stop to help us stop bleeding.

## **Why do we recommend a vitamin K shot at birth?**

The CDC recommends that all newborn babies get a shot of vitamin K in their leg in the hours after their birth. This shot gives your baby the vitamin K needed to help blood clot until their body starts making it.

Low vitamin K can cause serious long term problems or death in infants when there is bleeding into the brain or intestines. When babies get the vitamin K shot the chance of serious bleeding is about 1 in 100,000.

## **Are there any risks from the vitamin K shot?**

No, the vitamin K shot has been given to newborn babies in the United States and Europe since the 1960s without complications. Your baby may have some soreness at the injection site.

## **Can I eat more foods with vitamin K to help my baby get more through breastfeeding?**

No, we only get a small amount of vitamin K from the food we eat, most vitamin K is made by the good bacteria that live in our intestines (gut).

Only very small amounts of vitamin K cross the placenta and are found in your breast milk. Babies do not have the good bacteria in their intestines that produce vitamin K.

## **Can my baby have vitamin K drops by mouth instead of a shot?**

Vitamin K drops are not recommended in the United States. Studies have shown that the vitamin K shot works better than the drops to prevent bleeding problems.

## **If my baby is drinking formula, is the vitamin K shot still needed?**

Yes. Even though formula has some added vitamin K, it still can take up to a week for your baby to have enough to help clot blood well and prevent bleeding problems.

## **If I wait to circumcise my son until the eighth day of his life, does he still need the vitamin K shot?**

Waiting eight days to have your son circumcised is not enough to protect him from extra bleeding.

## **What if I do NOT want my baby to get the vitamin K shot?**

If you are refusing the vitamin K shot, you will need to sign a "Refusal to administer" at the hospital. This states that you know there is a risk for serious bleeding that can cause permanent problems or death. If you choose to refuse this, it is important for you to ask what signs to watch for once your baby is home.

## **For More Information:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Facts about vitamin K

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/vitamink/facts.html>

Frequently asked questions about vitamin K

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/vitamink/faqs.html>