

# Vitamin K and Your Baby

## Why is Vitamin K Important for Your Baby?

Vitamin K helps blood to clot. It is needed to prevent serious bleeding. Babies do not get enough vitamin K from their mothers during pregnancy or when they are breastfeeding.

Without vitamin K, babies are at risk of getting a rare disorder called vitamin K deficiency bleeding. This disorder can cause bleeding into the brain and may result in brain damage or even death.

Vitamin K deficiency bleeding can be prevented by giving newborns extra vitamin K. By the age of about 6 months, babies have built up their own supply.

## How is Vitamin K Given?

Babies are given vitamin K by injection (shot). One shot just after birth will protect your baby for many months.

## Do All Babies Get Vitamin K?

All babies need to have vitamin K. Very small or premature babies may need smaller doses. Your health care provider can talk with you about this.

## Does Vitamin K Have any Side Effects?

Vitamin K is not associated with any known side effects.

## Does Your Baby Have to Have Vitamin K?

Giving vitamin K to your newborn is a simple way of preventing a serious disease. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a single injection for all babies. This includes babies who are premature or sick and babies who are having surgery (including circumcision). **However, if you choose for your baby to not have a vitamin K shot, tell your nurse and health care provider or midwife.**

## When Should You Call Your Baby's Health Care Provider?

You should call your baby's health care provider if your baby has any unexplained bleeding or bruising. **This is especially important if your baby has not had vitamin K.** Babies with liver problems are especially at risk, even if they had vitamin K.

## How Do You Get Vitamin K for Your Baby?

Soon after birth, your baby will have a vitamin K shot by a nurse in the delivery room or nursery.

Talk with your health care provider or midwife if you have any questions.