

Vitamin K for Newborns

What Is Vitamin K?

Our bodies need vitamin K to form clots and to stop bleeding. We get vitamin K from the foods we eat, such as green leafy vegetables, fish, meat, and eggs.

Why Does My Newborn Need Vitamin K?

Babies are born with a very small amount of vitamin K. Not having enough can cause bleeding that doesn't stop because there isn't enough vitamin K to form a clot. The bleeding can happen inside or outside of the body – including the brain – at any time up to six months of age.

How Is Vitamin K Given to Babies?

The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends that doctors give newborns vitamin K by injection in the thigh within one to six hours after birth.

Giving vitamin K by mouth is not as effective as by injection. Vitamin K is not absorbed as well when given by mouth and does not last as long. Babies who get vitamin K by mouth are at increased risk of late vitamin K deficiency bleeding, which can occur within two to 12 weeks after birth and up to six months of age. This is why the standard at Bluewater Health is to give vitamin K by injection only.

Can't My Baby Get Vitamin K from My Breast Milk?

Breast milk contains very low amounts of vitamin K, so exclusively breastfed infants will not get enough. Even formula-fed babies have very low levels of vitamin K for several days.

Is the Vitamin K Injection Safe?

Yes, the vitamin K injection is very safe. There are no side effects. There may be some redness, swelling, or pain at the injection site. To reduce pain and discomfort, you can hold your baby, breastfeed your baby or give sucrose during the injection to comfort them.

What If I Wanted to Get My Baby Circumcised?

Most doctors will not perform a circumcision on babies if they have not received a vitamin K injection after birth.