

# Everything You Need to Know About Vitamin K for Newborns: Importance, Benefits, and Administration Methods



## Highlights

Vitamin K helps your baby's blood to clot.

Babies need more vitamin K than they get from their mother during pregnancy or from breast milk.

Parents of all newborns are offered a vitamin K injection for their baby soon after birth.

This helps prevent babies from becoming vitamin K deficient.

Without the injection, babies are at risk of developing vitamin K deficiency bleeding (VKDB).

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## **What is Vitamin K?**

Vitamin K is an essential vitamin that's needed for your baby's body to function properly. Vitamin K helps the blood to clot and prevents bleeding.

## **Why Vitamin K is Essential for Your Baby**

Babies do not get enough vitamin K during pregnancy or from breast milk. Without sufficient vitamin K, they are at risk of developing vitamin K deficiency bleeding (VKDB).

While vitamin K deficiency bleeding is very rare, affecting fewer than 1 in 100,000 babies, it can be very serious.

Vitamin K deficiency bleeding can cause bleeding in your baby's brain, leading to brain damage or even death.

This condition mostly affects breastfed babies.

By about 6 months, your baby will have their own supply of vitamin K.

## **How is Vitamin K Administered?**

It's recommended that babies receive a single vitamin K injection shortly after birth.

## **Can All Babies Receive Vitamin K?**

It is recommended that all babies receive vitamin K.

Premature or very small babies may need a smaller dose, which can be discussed with your doctor.

Your doctor may strongly recommend the injection if you have an assisted

delivery (e.g., forceps or vacuum), as there is a higher chance of hemorrhage.

### **Oral Vitamin K: An Alternative**

Some healthcare services offer vitamin K in liquid form. However, since the body does not absorb oral vitamin K as effectively, multiple doses are required:

First dose at birth.

Second dose at 3 to 5 days of age.

Third dose at 4 weeks old for fully breastfed babies.

If your baby vomits within one hour of taking the oral dose, another dose will be needed.

### **Side Effects of Vitamin K**

Vitamin K has been administered to newborns for many years without any known problems.

Although some studies have suggested a link between vitamin K and childhood cancer, health authorities have thoroughly investigated and found no connection.

### **How to Obtain Vitamin K for Your Baby**

Your doctor or midwife will ask if you want your baby to have vitamin K during pregnancy. Your decision will be recorded in your medical file.

After birth, a healthcare professional will administer vitamin K according to your decision.

Make sure the vitamin K doses are noted in your baby's health record.

### **Is Vitamin K Necessary for My Baby?**

While giving your baby vitamin K is optional, it is an effective and simple way to prevent VKDB, a serious condition.

If you decide against vitamin K, closely monitor your baby for signs of VKDB.

## Warning Signs to Watch For

Contact your doctor or child health nurse if your baby shows any of the following symptoms:

Unexplained bleeding or bruising.

Signs of jaundice (yellow skin or whites of the eyes) after 3 weeks of age.

Babies with liver issues may also have a higher risk of bleeding, even if they received vitamin K.

## Tools and Assistance

**Health Professionals:** Speak with your doctor, midwife, or pediatrician for detailed information about vitamin K and its importance for your baby. They can help you understand the risks and benefits of administering vitamin K.

**Baby Health Records:** Ensure that your baby's vitamin K doses are recorded in their personal health record. This will help track the administration and ensure your baby is receiving the correct doses.

**Child Health Nurse:** A child health nurse can assist in managing the timing of vitamin K doses, especially if you opt for oral vitamin K, and help with any follow-up care required.

**Prenatal Classes and Resources:** Many prenatal classes provide educational materials and discussions on vitamin K, newborn care, and other early childhood health issues. This can help you make informed decisions before your baby is born.

**Parent Support Groups:** Connect with local or online parent support groups where you can share experiences and gain insights from others about vitamin K administration and newborn health.

**Health Departments:** Contact your local health department for additional support and resources related to newborn health screenings and the administration of vitamin K.