

Supplemental Information

VITAMIN K INFORMATION SHEET

1. Vitamin K is used by the body to form clots and to prevent bleeding.
2. Babies are born with very little vitamin K in their bodies. Vitamin K does not cross the placenta, and levels are low in breast milk. It takes infants months to achieve sufficient vitamin K levels to prevent bleeding.
3. For 60 years in the United States, we have been giving newborns a one-time shot of vitamin K to prevent bleeding.
4. Babies who do not receive a vitamin K shot are 80 times more likely to have a severe bleed. The most common site of bleeding is the brain. One in 5 babies who have a serious bleeding event from vitamin K deficiency will die.
5. Bleeding from vitamin K deficiency is a risk during the first 6 months of life.
6. Vitamin K deficiency bleeding is now rare, and you may not ever have heard of it, because most infants receive the shot.
7. Vitamin K is not a vaccine. Vitamin K injection does not contain mercury. Vitamin K does not cause cancer. The vitamin K injection used in newborns is safe. The dose is not too high for newborns.
8. Oral vitamin K is not as effective as the one-time shot and must be given repeatedly over several months to be effective. There is no oral vitamin K product approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for newborns.
9. The momentary pain of the vitamin K shot can be lessened by holding the infant and breastfeeding.
10. The AAP recommends that every newborn receive a 1-time vitamin K shot at birth to prevent life-threatening bleeding and the complications that may follow.