Your baby and VITAMIN K

Vitamin K is a vital nutrient that our body needs for blood to clot and stop bleeding. Babies are born with very small amounts of vitamin K in their bodies. Vitamin K deficiency bleeding (VKDB) is a condition that occurs when the baby does not have enough vitamin K.

Protect Your Baby From Bleeds

How can I prevent VKDB?

The good news is that VKDB is preventable. The easiest and most reliable way to give babies vitamin K is by a shot into a muscle. One shot given shortly after birth will protect against VKDB.

Is vitamin K safe?

Yes. Vitamin K is safe and has no increased risk to the infant. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended vitamin K for all newborns since 1961.

Should all babies get a vitamin K shot at birth?

Yes. Babies do not have enough vitamin K at birth and are at risk for serious bleeding. Thus, it is very important that all babies get a vitamin K shot to prevent VKDB.

About half of all babies who develop VKDB bleed into their brains.

What are the warning signs of VKDB?

There are no warning signs in the majority of VKDB cases before a life-threatening bleed starts. Babies who do not get a vitamin K shot at birth might develop any of these signs of VKDB:

- Easy bruising especially around the baby's head and face
- Bleeding from the nose or umbilical cord
- Paler than usual skin color or, for dark skinned babies, pale looking gums
- Yellow coloring in the whites of eyes after 3 weeks of age
- Blood in the stool, black tarry stool or blood in vomit
- Irritability, seizures, excessive sleepiness, or excessive vomiting

Does my baby get vitamin K from breast milk?

Yes, but not enough to prevent VKDB. Babies are low in vitamin K for several weeks until they start eating regular foods, usually around four to six months, and normal intestinal bacteria start making vitamin K.

Resources

CDC.Gov/ncbddd/vitamink
HealthyChildren.org
EvidenceBasedBirth.com

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH &
SENIOR SERVICES
Bureau of Genetics and Healthy Childhood

This project is/was funded in part by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Title V Maternal Child Health Services Block Grant and is/was supported by the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant #B04MC45226, Maternal and Child Health Services for $12,469,248, of which $0 is from nongovernmental sources. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.