



Vitamin K

What is Vitamin K?

Vitamin K is a substance that is found naturally in the body. The liver needs Vitamin K in order to make proteins, which are essential to help blood clotting.

Newborn babies have low levels of Vitamin K in their blood which can occasionally cause bleeding problems. This is known as Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding (VKDB).

Some obvious signs of VKDB in the first few months include obvious bleeding

- From the umbilical stump
- In the urine
- From the bottom
- From the skin and mucous membranes, for example the nose and gums
- Appearing as bruises on the skin
- There is also a risk of internal bleeding, for example inside the head.

VKDB only occurs in a very small number of babies (1:10,000). The impact can vary from mild to fatal

Why should my baby be given Vitamin K?

As VKDB is completely preventable by giving your baby extra Vitamin K after he or she is born. It is strongly recommended that all newborn babies receive Vitamin K soon after birth to prevent VKDB until they build up their own supplies.

How is Vitamin K given?

We offer all newborn babies an injection of Vitamin K into the muscle as recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2006). Oral can be offered as an alternative but requires multiple doses to be effective.

Are there any risks?

In 1992, a small study showed a possible link between injections of vitamin K with childhood cancer. However since then there have been many more reports disproving this. Current well informed scientific opinion is that there is no link.

What happens if I don't want my baby to have the injection?

As parents you have the right to refuse. However we strongly recommend that you allow your baby to have this treatment, which lowers the risk of death or permanent handicap in a healthy baby.

What is the local policy?

Given the evidence, we routinely give injections of vitamin K 1mg to all newborn babies in the Midwifery Led Unit following parental consent.

References:

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. (2006) Routine postnatal care of women and their babies. NICE: London.

Guy's and Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. (2008) Vitamin K and your newborn baby. NHS: London.

Further Information

If you wish to discuss this in more depth, your midwife will be pleased to help you.



Midwifery Led Unit

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