

Vitamin K Summary

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Vitamin K is given to prevent a rare, but serious problem with bleeding in babies. Among babies without any known risk factors, it is estimated that:

- 1 in 12,000 would suffer some related bleeding
- 1 in 47,000 would suffer bleeding in the brain
- 1 in 53,000 would suffer some brain damage from bleeding in the brain
- 1 in 160,000 would die from bleeding in the brain¹

Most administration of Vitamin K in the U.S. is via a shot. Germany, The Netherlands, Denmark and Australia regularly give babies a series of oral doses of Vitamin K instead. According to a large study in Denmark, the two methods are equally effective.²

There are 3 controversies regarding Vitamin K shots.

- 1) Two studies found a higher risk for leukemia for babies who received a Vitamin K shot. Although theories exist for why that might be the case, many subsequent studies did not find a higher risk.
- 2) The shot may be painful, and some question if this has a negative effect on babies.
- 3) The shot is associated with Teixer's disease.³

As opposed to the high dose administered with the shot, the oral dose option is a lower dose spread out over 3 months. Specifically, the dosage is 2mg at birth, followed by weekly doses of 1mg for the first 3 months of life.⁴ Still, while the oral method has advantages, it is not recommended in many countries for fear that parents will not complete the series putting children at risk.⁵

Although the risk of bleeding is low (but higher for breastfed babies), giving your baby Vitamin K is worthwhile. You probably should only choose the oral Vitamin K option if you feel you will be capable of completing the dose regimen.

In the U.S., you can purchase oral Vitamin K drops from Birthwithlove Midwifery Supplies (Wellbaby.org has no affiliation with Birthwithlove Midwifery Supplies and does not vouch for this or any other supplier). The drops are available online at: <http://www.birthwithlove.com/categories/itempage.asp?prodid=Vitamin+K+1+%28Vit+K+1+%29%2DScientific+Laboratories%2Dthis+is+the+one+for+your+newborn>

¹ <http://www.womens-health.co.uk/vitk.asp>

² Weekly oral vitamin K prophylaxis in Denmark. *Acta Paediatr.* 2003 Jul;92(7):802-5.

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=pubmed&cmd=Retrieve&list_uids=12892158&query_hl=4&itool=pubmed_docsum

³ Scleroderma-like patch on the thigh in infants after vitamin K injection at birth: six observations, *Ann Dermatol Venereol.* 1996;123(10):634-8.

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=9615122&dopt=Abstract

⁴ Neonatal vitamin K prophylaxis in Denmark: three years' experience with oral administration during the first three months of life compared with one oral administration at birth. *Acta Paediatr.* 1996 Oct;85(10):1137-9.

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=8922069&dopt=Abstract

⁵ Routine administration of vitamin K to newborns, *Paediatrics & Child Health* 1997 2(6):429-31.

<http://www.cps.ca/english/statements/FN/fn97-01.htm>