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A letter to our patients

Congratulations on the birth of your new baby!

Christine and I are writing this letter to help you understand **why we recommend giving the Vitamin K shot to your baby.**

What is Vitamin K?

Vitamin K is a fat soluble vitamin that our body uses to make clots to stop bleeding. **All babies** are born with low vitamin K levels because they don't get very much from their mothers while they are in the womb.^{1 2} Vitamin K is stored in the liver and very little circulates in the blood so very little crosses the placenta. In addition, breast milk provides very little vitamin K.³ Babies don't start getting much vitamin K until they start eating solid foods around the age of 4-6 months. Because of all this, **babies that don't receive the Vitamin K shot at birth are at risk for developing Vitamin K deficiency bleeding (VKDB).**

What is Vitamin K deficiency bleeding (VKDB)?

VKDB is a condition where babies cannot stop bleeding because they do not have enough Vitamin K to form a clot. VKDB can range from bruising of the skin to bleeding inside the baby's brain.^{4 5 6} It can occur from birth to 6 months of age. Newborns that do not receive vitamin K at birth are 81 times more likely to develop severe bleeding than those who get the shot.⁴

How can we prevent Vitamin K deficiency bleeding?

VKDB can be prevented by giving your baby a single injection of Vitamin K.^{7 8}

Can't we just give Vitamin K orally?

Several studies have been done using oral Vitamin K and they have found that oral vitamin K prevents early VKDB but it is not effective for late onset VKDB.^{9 10 11 12 13}

I heard the Vitamin K shot can cause cancer, is this true?

No. In 1992, a *small* study in England found an association between vitamin K injection and leukemia.¹⁴ This was cause for concern and since then many *large* studies have found no link between Vitamin K injection and leukemia or any other cancer.^{15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23}

So what's the bottom line?

Vitamin K injection is safe and effective and we recommend that you give it to your newborn.²⁴

Sincerely,



Lori Anderson, M.D



Christine Kirkman, MSN, RN, CPNP

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