

Vitamin K Shot: What Parents Need to Know

- **Why do babies need a vitamin K shot?** Vitamin K is a fat-soluble nutrient that helps our bodies make blood clots to stop bleeding. Babies have very little vitamin K in their bodies at birth. 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.
- **How come I've never actually heard of a baby who had vitamin K deficiency bleeding?**
Babies in the United States have been receiving IM vitamin K since the 1960s, and it has virtually eliminated vitamin K deficiency bleeding. In recent years, though, we are starting to see an increase in vitamin K deficiency bleeding in the United States because more parents have been deciding not to give their babies the vitamin K shot at birth.
- **What is the risk of an infant developing vitamin K deficiency bleeding?** Without enough vitamin K, your baby has a chance of bleeding into his or her intestines, and brain, which can lead to brain damage and even death. 2 out of every 100 babies who do not get a vitamin K injection at birth develop vitamin K deficiency bleeding. 1 out of every 5 babies who develop vitamin K deficiency bleeding die.
- **What are the warning signs of vitamin K deficiency bleeding?** In the majority of vitamin K deficiency bleeding, there are no warning signs. The bleeding starts suddenly and may not be recognized until it is too late.
- **Does the vitamin K shot increase the risk of cancer?** There is extensive, strong evidence that there is no connection between vitamin K prophylaxis and any type of cancer in children or adults.
- **Can oral vitamin K be given instead of the shot?** Multiple different doses and regimens have been used and studied, and the results show that oral vitamin K is significantly less effective than the vitamin K shot, which virtually eliminates vitamin K deficiency bleeding.
- **Is the dosing safe for newborns?** The current dose has been the standard since at least the 1950s. Different doses were tried initially and based on enormous amounts



of data across numerous countries, the current standard dose of 1 mg IM vitamin K was determined to be both safe and effective.

- **Where can I learn more?** If you feel you need a more extensive conversation about Vitamin K, you can request a consultation with a pediatric hematologist. Ask your OB/GYN for more information.

Sources: [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [HealthyChildren.Org](#)