

Neonatal care

If your baby has been born prematurely or is poorly when they are born then they will be admitted to the Neonatal Unit and will receive vitamin K by injection as part of their care.

Declining vitamin K and documenting your decision.

Your midwife will make a clear entry in your infant Personal Child Health Record (red book) and in your maternity notes documenting your decision, and that you have received appropriate information.

Should you require further information this is available on NHS Website at:

Any further questions?

If you have any questions please ask your baby's nurse/midwife or you may ask to speak to a member of the Neonatal Medical Team.

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net
or telephone 01225 825656 / 826319

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Vitamin K and your baby

Parent information



Congratulations on the birth of your new baby!

This leaflet is to help you understand how vitamin K can protect your baby.

Why does my baby need Vitamin K?

Newborn babies are known to not have enough vitamin K. This is due to very little passing to the baby in the womb. Vitamin K is essential to make sure your baby's blood clots normally.

In grown adults we want a diet that contains vitamin K and our body can process this to keep us well. In the newborn baby a small amount of vitamin K is present in breast milk and it is added to artificial formula milk. However, babies remain at risk of vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding (VKDB) for the first several months of life. Without vitamin K the baby is at risk of developing VKDB

Protecting your baby

The Department of Health recommends all newborn babies receive vitamin K shortly after birth to protect them from VKDB.

Without vitamin K your baby may develop VKDB in the first few months of life, this may show as blood in:

- urine or bottom
- oozing from the umbilical cord
- skin, nose, mucus membranes – mouth gums
- bleeding from scratches that does not stop
- bruising appearing on the skin
- vomiting blood
- internal bleeding
- bleeding within the brain.

The impact of VKDB can be mild or catastrophic, for babies who experience bleeding within the brain they may be left with serious permanent brain injury or may die.

Is Vitamin K harmful to your baby?

Vitamin K is safe and it is good practice for baby to receive this to prevent the side effects of not receiving Vitamin K.

Babies more at risk

Some babies are more at risk than others and those with the greatest risk are:

- born prematurely before 37 weeks
- birth by ventouse (suction cup), forceps delivery or caesarean section.
- bruised at or shortly after birth.
- have had breathing difficulties at birth
- need to have surgery in the newborn period
- you are being treated with anticonvulsant medications

But it is important to know that even if your baby is not in the high risk group without vitamin K they may still develop VKDB

How is Vitamin K given?

It is best to give vitamin K as a single injection into the upper leg muscle of the baby shortly after birth. If you do not wish for your baby to receive this quick and small injection, then vitamin K may be given by mouth but repeat doses will be needed and can be unreliable given babies vomit lots at this age.