



# Your baby and **VITAMIN K**

Vitamin K is a vital nutrient that our body needs for blood to clot and stop bleeding. Babies are born with very small amounts of vitamin K in their bodies. Vitamin K deficiency bleeding (VKDB) is a condition that occurs when the baby does not have enough vitamin K.

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## **Protect Your Baby From Bleeds**

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### **How can I prevent VKDB?**

The good news is that VKDB is preventable. The easiest and most reliable way to give babies vitamin K is by a shot into a muscle. One shot given shortly after birth will protect against VKDB.

### **Is vitamin K safe?**

Yes. Vitamin K is safe and has no increased risk to the infant. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended vitamin K for all newborns since 1961.

### **Should all babies get a vitamin K shot at birth?**

Yes. Babies do not have enough vitamin K at birth and are at risk for serious bleeding. Thus, it is very important that all babies get a vitamin K shot to prevent VKDB.



# About half of all babies who develop VKDB bleed into their brains.

## What are the warning signs of VKDB?

There are no warning signs in the majority of VKDB cases before a life-threatening bleed starts. Babies who do not get a vitamin K shot at birth might develop any of these signs of VKDB:



- Easy bruising especially around the baby's head and face
- Bleeding from the nose or umbilical cord
- Paler than usual skin color or, for dark skinned babies, pale looking gums
- Yellow coloring in the whites of eyes after 3 weeks of age
- Blood in the stool, black tarry stool or blood in vomit
- Irritability, seizures, excessive sleepiness, or excessive vomiting

## Does my baby get vitamin K from breast milk?

Yes, but not enough to prevent VKDB. Babies are low in vitamin K for several weeks until they start eating regular foods, usually around four to six months, and normal intestinal bacteria start making vitamin K.



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH &  
SENIOR SERVICES**

Bureau of Genetics and Healthy Childhood

## Resources

[CDC.Gov/hcbddd/vitaminK](https://www.CDC.Gov/hcbddd/vitaminK)  
[HealthyChildren.org](https://www.HealthyChildren.org)  
[EvidenceBasedBirth.com](https://www.EvidenceBasedBirth.com)



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