

VITAMIN K

The Department of Health recommends that all newborn babies be given a Vitamin K supplement at birth. Approximately 1:10,000 babies may have a rare condition known as haemorrhagic disease of the newborn, a condition whereby the baby may have spontaneous internal bleeding. Vitamin K is used in the blood clotting mechanism.

Vitamin K is available by injection or orally and you should decide whether or not you wish your baby to receive Vitamin K, and if you do in what form. The booklet "Vitamin K and the Newborn" produced by AIMS (www.aims.org.uk) provides a detailed discussion of the subject.

Babies at higher risk of haemorrhagic disease (Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding):

- premature
- complicated birth e.g. forceps/ventouse/caesarean section
- have liver disease that may show as prolonged jaundice or have pale stools or dark urine
- fail to take or find it hard to absorb feeds
- are ill for other reasons
- have bleeding or spontaneous bruising in early infancy

It may be helpful to increase Vitamin K in your diet from 36 weeks. It is also important that from birth, until a year old if you notice bleeding or bruising which is unexplained that you get this investigated as a matter of urgency as it could be an indication of haemorrhagic disease.

Foods containing Vitamin K include:

Yoghurt, alfalfa, egg yolk, soya oil, fish liver oils, wholegrain cereals, cauliflower, turnips, green leafy vegetables, broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, green tea and kelp.

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