

Vitamine K

Info-parents

(updated February 2023)

Vitamine K is one of the many factors involved in blood clotting. It is also imply in the metabolism of bones, blood vessels and cells. For a healty adult, the principal source of vitamine K comes from alimentation (green vegetables, olive oil, and liver, for example, are good sources). In smaller proportion, the intestinal flora provides about 10% of the vitamin K level in the blood.

Babies are born with very low level of vatamin K. Newborns are born with a minimal supply of vitamine K due to the difficult passage of the vitamin through the placenta and the absence of intestinal flora at birth. In addition, colustrum and breast milk contain only a small amout of vitamine K.

Vitamin K deficiency poses a risk of unexpected bleeding called vitamine K deficiency bleeding. Without prevention, about 8,8 for 1000 000 babies will suffer from this hemorage. It manifests itself by various bleeding (bruises, haemorage of the digestive system...). Its most serious for mis an intracranial hemorrhage.

For several decades, the new borns have received a dose of vitamin K by intramuscular injection within hours of birth to prevent hemorrag. This preventive treatment reduced the incidence to 0,25 per 100 000 babies. All research shows that intramuscular injection is the mode of administration that best protects babies from the disease. Injectable form of vitamin K is the only one approved in Canada. The Canadian Paediatric Society and many heath organisations around the world recommended that vitamin K injections be given within the first six hours of life, given the well-known risks of hemorrhage and the difficulty of predicting which babies will suffer from it.

To this date, there are no known side effects or risks associated with vitamin K. Possible adverse reactions are related to the injection:

- The risk of hematoma or bleeding at the injection site
- Pain
- Psychological effects of pain on the baby or its parents.

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To reduce discomfort during the injection, your midwife will suggest that you do it when your baby is skin-to-skin and ideally when he or she is nursing. If you are giving birth in a hospital under the care of a doctor, you can request that the injection be done under these conditions.

Important note: Whether or not your baby has received vitamin K, seek prompt professional help if you notice any bruising or bleeding. During the first 6 months of life, be sure to tell the health care professionals you consult if your baby has not received vitamin K.

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