



# Patient Information

## Vitamin K for Newborn Babies





## **What is Vitamin K?**

Vitamin K is a vitamin which is needed for normal blood clotting.

### **Do all Babies need Vitamin K?**

Babies are born with lower levels of Vitamin K than adults. There is usually enough Vitamin K in the baby's system but on the rare occasion they may not have the right amount which may cause severe bleeding in the first few weeks of life. This is a condition known as Vitamin K deficiency bleeding, or VKDB.

Vitamin K has been given at birth to millions of babies since the 1950s because it protects them against VKDB. In line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines on Postnatal Care (2021), all babies born at Milton Keynes University Hospital are offered Vitamin K.

### **How common is Vitamin K deficiency bleeding?**

Vitamin K deficiency bleeding (VKDB) is now rare because national guidance supports the giving of Vitamin K to babies when they are newborn and this good practice is widespread across the country.

### **Are any babies at special risk of VKDB?**

Some babies may be at higher risk, this includes:

- Babies who are premature
- Babies who are having difficulty taking or absorbing feeds
- Babies who may have had a traumatic delivery
- Babies who are not well (for example with an infection)
- Babies whose mothers have been receiving medication associated with a higher risk of bleeding in the newborn period e.g. anticonvulsant drugs (medicine given for epilepsy).

### **Can Vitamin K be harmful?**

There is no proven evidence to suggest that Vitamin K given to newborn babies can be harmful.

### **How is Vitamin K given?**

At Milton Keynes University Hospital soon after birth Vitamin K is either given as a single injection, or it is given orally. The injection provides sufficient protection – no further doses are required.

The medication is called Phytomeniadone, and the dosage is 1mg for term babies born after 36 weeks' gestation. The dose is reduced for preterm or small babies less than 1.8kg.

If your baby is at increased risk of Vitamin K deficiency or bleeding, your midwife or doctor will recommend the injection rather than giving Vitamin K orally.

When Vitamin K is taken orally it needs to be given at regular intervals. Your baby will receive the first dose soon after birth.

A second dose is given between four and seven days after birth. If at home the Community Midwife will administer as part of the routine checks on day five.



A third dose is given at four weeks of age. This is due to levels of Vitamin K in breast milk varying. Babies who are fully breast-fed will require this to prevent late VKDB. For bottle-fed babies no further dose is required as Vitamin K is an ingredient in all newborn formula milks.

**You will need to get a prescription from your GP for Vitamin K and arrange for this to be given by the GP Practice Nurse or Health Visitor.**

### **Consent**

We hope this information along with the discussion with your Midwife or Doctor will enable you to make an informed decision before you go into labour about giving Vitamin K to your baby. Your decision will be recorded in your electronic maternity records.

During labour, the Midwife looking after you will confirm your preference for how your baby will receive Vitamin K and gain consent to give it. Your decision will be recorded in the birth records.

### **Where can I get further information?**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) website gives detailed information into Vitamin K. Any Midwife or Paediatrician would be happy to discuss Vitamin K with you, so please just ask.

**Community Midwives** - 01908 996 484 (between the hours of 9:00am-05:00pm) . Please leave a voice message on the answer phone if a member of the team is unable to answer your call.

**ADAU/Maternity Triage** – 01908 996483

**NHS Website** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-k/>

**If you require further information, please speak to your midwife.**

**We encourage patients to be involved in their care by:**

1. Being part of the conversation and shared decision making
2. Asking questions if something is not clear
3. Speaking up if you have concerns

Checks are there to protect you, and you can be part of them. Behave with respect and kindness towards healthcare professionals.

**We ask for information about you so that you can receive proper care and treatment. This information remains confidential and is stored securely by the Trust in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018/GDPR. Further guidance can be found within our privacy notice found on our Trust website: [www.mkuh.nhs.uk](http://www.mkuh.nhs.uk)**

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