

## Antenatal Shared Care Patient Fact Sheet

# Vitamin K

### What is Vitamin K?

Vitamin K is a vitamin that naturally occurs in our bodies. The vitamin helps to clot the blood and is essential to prevent serious bleeding.



### Why does my baby need to be given Vitamin K?

After a baby is born it takes a few months for their bodies to make enough Vitamin K to ensure their blood can clot properly. By giving your baby Vitamin K it makes sure they will have enough to clot their blood and can prevent a rare disorder, known as, haemorrhagic disease of the newborn (HDN). HDN can cause bleeding into the brain and could result in brain damage or in extreme cases even death.

### How will Vitamin K be given to my baby?

Vitamin K can be given to your baby by injection or orally. Only one injection is required, however, oral dosage is more complicated. To give your baby Vitamin K orally you will need to make sure your baby has one dose at birth, one between three and five days after birth and another one in their fourth week of life.

There are a few reasons babies may not be able to have Vitamin K orally, including if they are ill; if they are born prematurely or if their mum has had medication during pregnancy for epilepsy, blood clots or tuberculosis.

### How long does the dose of Vitamin K protect my baby?

One Vitamin K injection is enough to last your baby for months. They will only need one injection or one course of oral treatment.

### Can all babies be given Vitamin K?

Yes. All babies can be given Vitamin K.

### Does Vitamin K have any side effects?

No. Vitamin K has been used in Australia for more than 25 years without any apparent side effects and has eradicated HDN. There was one study that suggested there could be a link between Vitamin K and childhood cancer, but this study has since been disproved.

### Do all babies have to be given Vitamin K?

No. It is your choice if your baby is given Vitamin K. However, medical experts in Australia agree that babies are given Vitamin K to prevent the very serious disease of HDN.

### When is my baby given Vitamin K?

Your baby will be given a Vitamin K shortly after birth, while you are still in the Delivery Suite or Birth Centre. If you would prefer your baby to have Vitamin K orally, please speak with your health practitioner.