

# Caregiver's Guide to Vitamin K

## Why is Vitamin K Important?

- Vitamin K is a required nutrient that the body uses to form a blood clot to stop bleeding.
- Bleeding can occur in any organ and go unnoticed, especially within the brain or intestines, which can lead to death

## Sources of Vitamin K

- Found in food we eat (e.g. in leafy green vegetables and fats/oils)
- Made by “good bacteria” in the body’s intestines

## Babies and Vitamin K Deficiency

- Newborn babies are born with very small amounts of vitamin K in their body because vitamin K doesn’t cross the placenta
- There is not enough bacteria to make vitamin K in the intestines in newborn babies
- It takes 4-6 months for babies to develop the “good bacteria” in the intestines to make vitamin K
- Breast milk and formula do not contain enough vitamin K to prevent bleeding

## Symptoms of Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding:

- Unable to clot the blood
- Bruising
- Bleeding from the nose or umbilical cord
- Pale skin
- Yellow eyes after 3 weeks of age
- Symptoms of bleeding in the intestines: blood in stool or vomit or black tarry stools

- Symptoms of bleeding in the brain: irritability, seizures, excessive sleepiness, or vomiting

## Is the Vitamin K Shot Safe?

- **YES**
- Vitamin K has been proven to be safe for prevent vitamin K deficiency bleeding in multiple studies dating back to 1961
- Ingredients in the shot are safe for all babies, and preservative free versions of the shot are available

## Should All Babies Receive the Vitamin K Shot?

- **YES**, all babies are born without enough vitamin K and do not have enough to prevent bleeding until they can start producing it on their own. Without it, any bleeding events can lead to serious injuries including death
- A one time vitamin K shot into the muscle at birth has almost completely eliminated vitamin K deficiency bleeding in babies under 6 months of age
- Giving vitamin K by mouth does not work as well as the vitamin K shot for the prevention of bleeding

## Where can I find more information?

- **CDC website:**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/vitamink/facts.html>
- **Ask your pediatrician or your pharmacist**