

VITAMIN K

Dear Parent

When your baby is born she/he could be at risk of a bleeding disorder due to the lack of Vitamin K. This vitamin can be given to your baby in the form of an injection. On the day of the baby's birth you will be asked if you wish this injection to be given to your baby. This leaflet has been produced by the Midwives and Paediatricians of Cardiff & Vale UHB to help you make a decision.

BLEEDING DISORDER DUE TO THE LACK OF VITAMIN K

In comparison to adults, all newborn babies have a low Vitamin K level. In the majority of cases this does not cause any problems, but very occasionally babies are so short of this Vitamin that their blood does not clot properly – as a result they may bruise easily or bleed, which in the worst cases may be fatal.

Of 100,000 babies born in the United Kingdom, about 9 will suffer from this bleeding disorder due to the lack of Vitamin K. Research has found it to be more common in breast fed infants.

Some babies are more at risk of getting a bleeding disorder.

These are babies who are born:-

- ❖ Prematurely (early)
- ❖ Breech (bottom or feet first)
- ❖ By forceps or Caesarean Section
- ❖ Babies who have been distressed during labour, or have a liver disorder.
- ❖ Babies born to mothers who have taken prescribed medicines such as anticonvulsants and anti-tuberculosis drugs.

PREVENTION

The Department of Health, the Welsh Government, NICE and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health **recommend that all babies are given Vitamin K by injection soon after birth.**

Because the injection is particularly effective, no further doses of Vitamin K are needed by babies who have a Vitamin K injection at birth. There has been concern from earlier research that there might be a slight link between giving the Vitamin K by injection and some forms of childhood cancer. More recent research has shown that this possible link either doesn't exist or is very tiny and is much less than the risk of serious bleeding without extra Vitamin K. No link has been found when Vitamin K is given by mouth. If you do not wish your baby to have an injection the Vitamin K can be given by mouth on the day of birth and when your baby is 6-10 days old. If you are breastfeeding your baby she/he will require a further dose when she/he is 21-28 days old. Bottle fed babies do not require the 3rd dose as Vitamin K is added into formula milk.

Your Choice

We would like you to give this matter about Vitamin K some thought during your pregnancy so that you will make a decision once your baby is born. If you would like any more information, please do not hesitate to contact your Named Midwife.

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