Title: Your Baby and Vitamin K: Prevent Dangerous Bleeding in Your Newborn with Vitamin K Injection at Birth

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Abstract: When babies are born they have low levels of an important vitamin, vitamin k, in their body. This can lead to a form of unexpected, potentially deadly bleeding between birth and 12 weeks of age. Giving a single injection of vitamin K at birth easily prevents dangerous bleeding in your baby. Some people have concerns about the safety of giving vitamin k injections to newborns. This pamphlet describes how vitamin k injection is a safe and effective way to prevent vitamin K deficiency bleeding (VKDB) of the newborn.

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Prevent dangerous bleeding in your baby with vitamin K injection at birth

What is Vitamin K?

Vitamin K plays an important role in helping blood to clot properly and helps prevent our bodies from bleeding too much. Low levels of vitamin K can raise the risk of uncontrolled bleeding. While vitamin K deficiencies are rare in adults, they are very common in newborn babies, even babies who are otherwise healthy.

Many parents have questions about the care their baby will receive while they are in the hospital after being born. One important way to make sure your baby stays healthy after birth is to be sure he or she receives a injection of vitamin K soon after being born.

Is the vitamin K injection a vaccine?

The vitamin K injection is not a vaccine, which means that it does not protect against an infection caused by a virus or bacteria. The injection is a dose of a vitamin needed in all human bodies, vitamin K. This injection helps prevent dangerous bleeding in your newborn baby.

Why does my baby need a vitamin K injection?

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetrician Gynecologists recommend vitamin K injections for all babies soon after birth. Babies are born with low levels of vitamin K in their bodies because this important vitamin only passes between mother and baby in small amounts before birth.
Vitamin K levels normally rise in babies’ bodies toward the end of their first week. However, because breast milk has low levels of vitamin K, babies who are fed breast milk may have low levels of vitamin K for many weeks.

Vitamin K is needed to help our bodies prevent bleeding. Babies with low levels of vitamin K are at risk of developing sudden, dangerous bleeding that is difficult to stop and treat. This bleeding can occur suddenly, even in babies who are healthy when they are born. This bleeding can cause brain damage, organ damage or even death.

Can my baby receive the dose of vitamin K in some way other than an injection?
An oral dose of vitamin K is available in some hospitals. The oral dose of vitamin K is an effective way to prevent dangerous bleeding in your baby during his or her first few weeks. However, studies have shown that in countries where oral doses of vitamin K are given instead of injections, babies sometimes develop dangerous bleeding later, between 2-12 weeks of age. Injections of vitamin K last much longer than oral doses and prevent this later bleeding as well.

What are the risks from a vitamin K injection?
Vitamin K injections are very safe for newborn babies when given the correct dose of vitamin K. Too much vitamin K can cause complications like anemia or allergic reactions, however these have only been reported in babies that received vitamin K doses many times larger than the dose given in the injection. Your baby may experience some pain at the time of the injection and may cry for a few minutes after the injection is given. The risk of uncontrolled bleeding from not having the vitamin K injection is much, much greater than any risk associated with the injection itself.

Someone told me that the vitamin K injection causes cancer. Is this true?
In 1992 a report was published that suggested a link between vitamin K injections given to newborns at birth and a higher chance of developing cancer as a child. This concern was taken very seriously by Pediatrician researchers, and many additional studies have been conducted to investigate this question. Since that time, many other carefully conducted studies have found no evidence of increased cancer risk in children who received vitamin K injections at birth. The report that originally suggested the link has been carefully reviewed by many researchers as well as by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The data used in that report has been found to support no link between vitamin K injections and childhood cancer.

How can I learn more?
*Talk with your doctor or nurse. They can give you more information or suggest other sources.
*The website of the American Academy of Pediatrics has more information on this and other issues concerning your child’s health. You can access this information at:

www.aap.org