

Contact information

Maternity ward

01695 656947 / 01695 656920

Community midwives

- Ormskirk - 01695 656668
- Southport - 01704 704513
- Sapphire Team (out of area) - 01695 656260

There may be students and observers present during your consultation as part of their ongoing training. Please let the staff know if you do not wish any students to be present during your attendance.

Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road,
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR
Telephone: 0151 426 1600

St Helens Hospital
Marshalls Cross Road,
St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3DA
Telephone: 01744 26633

Southport Hospital
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Southport, Merseyside, PR8 6PN
Telephone: 01704 547 471

Ormskirk Hospital
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Vitamin K in babies

If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format
please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید،
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formacie,
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

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What is vitamin K and why is it important?

What is Vitamin K?

Vitamin K is an essential vitamin which is made in the bowel that is used for blood clotting. Babies have very little vitamin K in their bodies at birth because:

- Vitamin K from the mum is not easily shared with the developing baby during the pregnancy.
- The intestine of the newborn baby has very little bacteria, so they do not make enough Vitamin K on their own.

What is Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding (VKDB)?

VKDB is a serious disorder occurring in babies that can cause internal bleeding. This bleeding can occur anywhere including in the brain, which can lead to death and severe disability. The low levels of vitamin K babies are naturally born with is the main cause of VKDB.

Every baby born has a risk of developing VKDB. In those that have developed VKDB, 1 out of 4 did not have any risks factors. VKDB can occur without warning up until the age of 1.

Some babies are at a higher risk of VKDB:

- Premature babies
- Babies that had ventouse or forceps used during delivery
- Babies with liver disease
- Medical problems that affect absorption of fat based vitamins
- Babies of mothers taking anti-convulsant medications
- Babies of mothers with significant liver disease.

Giving Vitamin K at birth is extremely effective at preventing VKDB and is recommended by the Department of Health. There are no alternative treatments to prevent VKDB.

Signs of VKDB

- Bleeding, e.g. from the mouth, nose or umbilical cord
- Blood in stool or vomiting blood
- Unexplained bruises
- Irritability, seizures, sleepiness may all be signs of bleeding in the brain.

If you are concerned about your baby, please seek advice from a midwife or your GP.

How is vitamin K given?

There are two ways of giving vitamin K, by injection or by mouth. NICE guidelines recommend the best method of administration is by injection. If you do not wish for your baby to receive an injection, vitamin K can be given orally, although it is not as effective. When vitamin K is given by mouth, doses must be repeated as the absorption is unreliable. One dose of oral vitamin K is given at birth, and another after 1 week. Breastfed babies need another dose at 1 month of age, as vitamin K is added to formula milk. Arrangements must be made to ensure that all recommended oral doses are given at the right time.

Is vitamin K safe?

Vitamin K is a very safe medicine that has been used for many years in the NHS for this purpose. A concern was raised in the 1990s that Vitamin K was linked to leukaemia or other cancers, but following a careful review of the data from the UK Children's Cancer Study Group in 2003, no evidence was found to support this concern.

This information booklet will help you to make an informed choice about giving Vitamin K to your baby.

If you have any questions about Vitamin K, please ask your midwife. If you decline Vitamin K, you will be offered a further discussion with a paediatric doctor.