

WHAT ARE VITAMIN K INJECTIONS?

Vitamin K is an essential part of blood clotting. All babies are born with low levels of this vitamin. When vitamin K levels are too low, babies may develop Hemorrhagic Disease of the Newborn (HDN). HDN can be seen in many ways, the most life-threatening including bleeding into the brain, abdomen and chest which can occur from birth until 12 weeks of life.

To reduce the risk of HDN, doctors prescribe vitamin K. The vitamin K is given in a shot to babies during the first day of life. The success of vitamin K injections has been so dramatic that many doctors have never seen an infant who has HDN, now known as vitamin K deficiency.

It is a popular trend in some areas for parents to refuse to allow Vitamin K to be given to their baby. They want to keep things “natural” for the infant, but it is important to keep in mind that the infants most at risk for this disease are the “healthy babies” who are only breast fed.

Although formula has vitamin K in it, absorption of the vitamin K in formula is less reliable than absorption from an injection. Therefore, the vitamin K in formula does not replace the need for a vitamin K injection.

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