Vitamin K Summary
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Vitamin K is given to prevent a rare, but serious problem with bleeding in babies. Among babies without any known risk factors, it is estimated that:

- 1 in 12,000 would suffer some related bleeding
- 1 in 47,000 would suffer bleeding in the brain
- 1 in 53,000 would suffer some brain damage from bleeding in the brain
- 1 in 160,000 would die from bleeding in the brain

Most administration of Vitamin K in the U.S. is via a shot. Germany, The Netherlands, Denmark and Australia regularly give babies a series of oral doses of Vitamin K instead. According to a large study in Denmark, the two methods are equally effective.

There are 3 controversies regarding Vitamin K shots.

1) Two studies found a higher risk for leukemia for babies who received a Vitamin K shot. Although theories exist for why that might be the case, many subsequent studies did not find a higher risk.
2) The shot may be painful, and some question if this has a negative effect on babies.
3) The shot is associated with Texier’s disease.

As opposed to the high dose administered with the shot, the oral dose option is a lower dose spread out over 3 months. Specifically, the dosage is 2mg at birth, followed by weekly doses of 1mg for the first 3 months of life. Still, while the oral method has advantages, it is not recommended in many countries for fear that parents will not complete the series putting children at risk.

Although the risk of bleeding is low (but higher for breastfed babies), giving your baby Vitamin K is worthwhile. You probably should only choose the oral Vitamin K option if you feel you will be capable of completing the dose regimen.

In the U.S., you can purchase oral Vitamin K drops from Birthwithlove Midwifery Supplies (WellBaby.org has no affiliation with Birthwithlove Midwifery Supplies and does not vouch for this or any other supplier). The drops are available online at:
http://www.birthwithlove.com/categories/itempage.asp?prodid=Vitamin+K+1+%28Vit+K+1+%29+Scientific+Laboratories%2Dthis+is+the+one+for+your+newborn

1 http://www.womens-health.co.uk/vitk.asp
http://www.cps.ca/english/statements/FN/fr97-01.htm