

Three At-Birth Medications Recommended for your Newborn

What are the three recommended medications?

1. Vitamin K
2. Hepatitis B vaccine
3. Erythromycin

Why does my baby need these medications?

These medications are important for your baby's health. Both the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advise that all newborns receive these medications. Every baby born at Hoag Hospital will receive these three medications during their newborn stay.

How will these medications be given?

Vitamin K and the hepatitis B vaccine are both given by injection to the thigh. Both medications are preservative-free. Erythromycin ointment is applied to both eyes.

Why are these medications important?

VITAMIN K

Vitamin K is needed for blood clotting. People do not make vitamin K on their own but obtain it through the "good" bacteria in our intestines. Newborns do not have much vitamin K in their bodies because their intestines do not have the good bacteria yet. This means all newborns are at higher risk for vitamin K deficiency bleeding (VKDB). VKDB occurs when babies cannot stop bleeding because their blood does not have enough vitamin K to form a clot.

Additionally, breastmilk contains low amounts of vitamin K. Therefore, breast-fed newborns are not getting enough vitamin K to improve their clotting ability. If your baby does not receive the vitamin K injection and gets VKDB, the associated bleeding can be serious and cause brain injury or death.

VKDB is easily prevented. A vitamin K injection given right after birth protects babies from VKDB. Unfortunately, oral vitamin K drops do not offer the same level of protection as the injection. Once an infant begins eating solid food, their normal intestinal bacterial will start making the vitamin K they need.



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HEPATITIS B VACCINE

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver. About 1,000 U.S. newborns are diagnosed with hepatitis B each year. Most of these newborns will develop a chronic (long-term) hepatitis B infection, which can lead to severe conditions such as end-stage liver disease (cirrhosis), liver cancer and death.

The most common way a newborn gets a hepatitis B infection is from their mothers. Some mothers may not know they have the infection, even though they are tested for hepatitis B during pregnancy. Babies can also get hepatitis B from exposure to blood and other bodily fluids from other frequent contacts and caregivers such as partners, siblings, grandparents, daycare workers, nannies/babysitters, and health care workers.

The AAP/CDC recommends that infants receive their first hepatitis B vaccine within the first 24 hours of life. This vaccine protects all infants from all possible hepatitis B infection sources, even if their mother is hepatitis B positive.

ERYTHROMYCIN EYE OINTMENT

Neonatal conjunctivitis is an eye infection caused by bacteria. Because the mother's birth canal normally has bacteria, newborn eyes can become infected during delivery. These infections can be serious, with some leading to blindness. Application of erythromycin eye ointment reduces the risk of newborn eye infections.

Questions?

Please call your doctor or health care provider if you have more questions or concerns.

VISIT THESE WEBSITES TO LEARN MORE



Vitamin K
CDC Recommendations
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/vitamink/index.html>



Hepatitis B Vaccine
CDC Recommendations
qrgo.page.link/3Ph3D



Hepatitis B Vaccine
AAP Recommendations
qrgo.page.link/3mKoV



Conjunctivitis
CDC Resource
qrgo.page.link/Gg9kW