

“3 at Birth”

The medicines your newborn will receive

This handout is for parents having their baby at UWMC - Northwest. It explains the 3 medicines that your baby will receive right after birth.

Why does my baby need medicines?

Every baby born at UWMC - Northwest will receive 3 medicines during the first 2 hours after birth:

- Vitamin K
- Erythromycin
- Hepatitis B vaccine

These medicines are important for your baby's health. Both the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) advise that all newborns receive these medicines.

How will these medicines be given?

- Vitamin K is given by injection to the thigh.
- Erythromycin ointment is applied to both eyes.
- The hepatitis B vaccine is given by injection to the thigh.



To ease stress, we suggest babies receive these medicines while they are skin-to-skin with their mother.

Why are these medicines important?

Vitamin K

Vitamin K is needed for blood clotting. It is produced by the “good” bacteria in our intestines.

Newborns have very little vitamin K in their bodies. Their intestines do not yet have the good bacteria that produce vitamin K. 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.

Breast milk contains very low amounts of vitamin K. If you feed your baby **only** breast milk, they will not get enough vitamin K.

If you refuse the vitamin K injection and your baby gets VKDB, it can be very serious. The bleeding could cause brain injury or death.

VKDB is easily prevented. A vitamin K shot given right after birth protects almost all babies from VKDB. Once babies start eating regular foods, their normal intestinal bacteria will start making all the vitamin K they need.

Hepatitis B Vaccine

Hepatitis B (hep B) is an infection of the liver. This infection can be prevented by an injection. Sadly, about 1,000 U.S. newborns get hep B each year. Most of these infants will likely develop a *chronic* (long-term) hep B infection. Some babies with a chronic infection die of liver disease if they do not receive treatment.

Babies can get hep B from their mothers. But, some mothers may not know they have the infection. Also, the baby's care team may not know that the mother has hep B if her test results were misread or reported incorrectly.

The AAP and CDC advise that infants who weigh 4 pounds, 6 ounces or more receive their first hepatitis B vaccine within the first 24 hours of life. **This shot protects all infants, even if their mothers have hep B.**

Erythromycin Eye Ointment

Neonatal conjunctivitis is a type of eye infection. It is caused by bacteria. The most serious risk of this infection is blindness.

Babies can be infected when they pass through the birth canal if their mother has *chlamydia* or *gonorrhea*. About half of newborns who have an eye infection also have the infection in other parts of their body.

Erythromycin eye ointment reduces the risk of eye infection. This reduces the risk of blindness from the infection.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

**Childbirth Center at
UWMC - Northwest:**

Call 206.668.1882, 24 hours
a day, 7 days a week

To Learn More

Visit these websites to learn more:

Hepatitis B Vaccine

- www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/hep-b.html
- www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/AAP-Recommendations-That-Infants-Receive-First-Hepatitis-B-Dose-Within-24-Hours-of-Birth.aspx

Conjunctivitis

- www.cdc.gov/conjunctivitis/newborns.htm