

# Common Newborn Procedures



A quick-guide to start your research and decision-making.

## Vitamin K Shot

Newborns have low vitamin K, which helps blood clot. Vitamin K is added to infant formula. Breastfed babies are at increased risk. Vitamin K is recommended for all babies and is given as an injection in the thigh. It is not a vaccine.

### PROS

- > Prevents dangerous spontaneous bleeding, including brain bleeds from vit. K deficiency, sometimes death (Shearer, 2009)
- > Reduces incidence from 5-10/100,000 to zero (Dekker, 2013)
- > Standard of care for over 60 years: side effects minor and/or very rare (American Academy Pediatrics, 1961)

### CONS

- > Objections to black box warning about *intravenous* vit K: unfounded because the shot is *intramuscular*
- > Possible objections to ingredients: Preservative-free version is available, just ask! Oral K is also sometimes used.

## Eye Ointment

An antibiotic gel put in baby's eyes to prevent eye infection leading to blindness caused by infection from chlamydia or gonorrhea passed from mother to baby during birth.

### PROS

- > Prevents infection, blindness (Ali, Khadije et al. 2007)
- > A way to "play it safe" if you or your partner haven't been.

### CONS

- > Also kills the good microbes, contributes to antibiotic resistance (Hedbert et al. 1990)
- > Makes eyes blurry during important bonding time
- > Not 100% effective; important to monitor (Lund et al., 1987)
- > Often unnecessary; safe to wait and see (Dekker, 2013)

## Bathing

Wiping away the vernix and bathing the baby are common in the first day. The WHO recommends waiting 24 hrs.

### PROS

- > Baby looks clean
- > Removes any stool that may have got on baby during birth
- > Can be pleasant for baby if done the LeBoyer way

### CONS

- > Removes baby's and mom's natural, comforting scent, can interfere with initiation of breastfeeding (Smith, 2009)
- > Vernix is an antioxidant, anti-fungal, antibacterial and hydrating. (Singh & Archana, 2008)
- > Harder for baby to maintain body temp (Bergstrom, 2005)
- > When done in first hours, interferes with bonding

## Delayed Cord Clamping

Clamping (and then cutting) the umbilical cord encourages the placenta to separate and separates the baby from the mom/placenta. Waiting 2+ minutes is delayed clamping.

### PROS

- > Safety net for slow to perk-up or breathe babies. Baby can get oxygen from cord blood. (Raju & Singal, 2012)
- > Some of the baby's blood gets backed up into the cord/placenta and will pulse back to baby (Raju & Singal, 2012)
- > No one can take the baby if it's still attached
- > Higher iron levels (Hutton & Hassan, 2007)

### CONS

- > If cord is unusually short, baby may not reach your chest.

## Hepatitis B Vaccine

A shot given at birth to prevent a liver-destroying infection that is spread through blood and sex. According to the WHO (2015), 80-90% of infants who are infected (usually by mom during birth) will have life-long problems.

### PROS

- > If exposed to Hep B in hospital, by mom, or at any time it can protect baby from infection.
- > Protection from Hep B is >90% for life w/3 doses (CDC, 2015)

### CONS

- > Risks of vaccines and/or ingredients (NVIC, 2008)
- > May mess with baby's new immune system (Lee, et al., 2008)

## Male Circumcision

Removal of part of the penis, typically for cosmetic reasons, in some cases during a religious rite.

### PROS

- > Slightly lower risk HIV & STD transmission as an adult (Sigfried, et al., 2009; Weiss et al., 2006; Morris et al., 2012)
- > Lower risk of infant UTI (Dubrovsky et al, 2012)

### CONS

- > Very painful, often done without drugs (Lander, et. al., 1997)
- > Complications, mistakes, amputation (Williams & Kapila, 1993)
- > Shortens penis 25% (Davenport, 1996)
- > Reduced sexual sensation (Kim/Pang, 2007; Sorrels et. al, 2007)
- > Pain may interfere with breastfeeding (Howard, et. al., 1984)
- > Irreversible: He may wish he hadn't been (Hammond, 1999)