

Facts about Vitamin K¹

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Why do we need vitamin K?

Vitamin K is one of the fat-soluble vitamins. It helps the body make proteins that are needed for normal blood clotting. Vitamin K also is needed for making important bone proteins.

What happens if we don't get enough vitamin K?

Not getting enough vitamin K can cause serious problems with blood clotting. Without vitamin K, blood takes a long time to clot. This can cause excessive blood loss and increased risk of death from injuries.

Anticoagulant medications such as warfarin (Coumadin[®]) interfere with normal use of vitamin K in the body.



Eating very large or very small amounts of vitamin K can change how these drugs work. So it's best to limit your intake of foods such as spinach and turnip

greens, which are very high in vitamin K. If you take an anticoagulant, keep your vitamin K intake consistent from day to day.

People who take anticoagulants should check with their doctor before taking vitamin E supplements, or herbs such as ginkgo and garlic. High doses of vitamin E can interfere with the action of vitamin K in the body.



How much vitamin K do we need?

The following table lists recommended daily intakes of vitamin K:

Life Stage	Vitamin K (µg/day)
Men, ages 19+	120
Women, ages 19+	90
Pregnancy	90
Breastfeeding	90
µg = micrograms	

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How can we get enough vitamin K?



Vitamin K is found mostly in vegetables, especially green vegetables. Collards, spinach, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cabbage contain vitamin K.

Some fruits, such as kiwi, blackberries, and blueberries are also good sources.



Here are some foods and the amount of vitamin K they contain:

Food	Vitamin K (µg per serving)
Turnip greens, cooked, ½ cup	425
Spinach, raw, 1 cup	145
Broccoli, cooked, ½ cup	110
Cabbage, cooked, ½ cup	37
Kiwi fruit, 1 medium	30
Blackberries, 1 cup	30
Okra, cooked, ½ cup	30
Blueberries, 1 cup	30
Red grapes, 1 cup	25
Green beans, cooked, ½ cup	10
µg = micrograms	

We also get some vitamin K from the bacteria that normally live in our large intestines. These bacteria make vitamin K and we are able to absorb some of it.

Newborns have very little vitamin K in their bodies. They usually receive a shot of vitamin K soon after birth. This shot of vitamin K allows normal blood clotting to occur during the first weeks of life.

What about supplements?

Most people get plenty of vitamin K in their diet, so supplements usually are not needed. Multivitamin supplements are available with or without vitamin K. If you take an anticoagulant, avoid supplements that contain vitamin K.



Research has not yet found problems from consuming too much vitamin K from food or supplements, except for people who take anticoagulant medications.

Where can I get more information?

The Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) agent at your county Extension office may have more written information and nutrition classes for you to attend. Also, a registered dietitian (RD) can provide reliable information to you.

Reliable nutrition information may be found on the Internet at the following sites:

<http://fyics.ifas.ufl.edu>
<http://www.eatright.org>
<http://www.nutrition.gov>