

**Vitamin K**  
Information for parents-to-be



*Obstetrics & Gynaecology*

patient**information**



### Vitamin K

The Department of Health recommends that all babies are given a Vitamin K supplement at birth. However the decision is entirely yours about whether your baby receives extra Vitamin K and how it is given. We hope the information given in this booklet will help you make your choice.

### What is Vitamin K?

Vitamin K is naturally present in some foods, like liver and some vegetables. It helps to make blood clot and therefore prevents bleeding.

### Why does my baby need Vitamin K?

A new born baby does not have enough Vitamin K and is at 'risk' of bleeding from the nose, mouth or into the brain. This is called Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding (VKDB).

Whilst this is a rare condition affecting 1 in 10,000 babies born at full term, Bleeding which may occur in the brain, can cause brain damage or even death.

**Giving Vitamin K supplements in sufficient amounts can eliminate that risk.**

### **Do all babies need supplementary Vitamin K?**

Yes, all babies may be at risk but certain babies are at a higher risk. These include:

- Babies of mothers who take anticonvulsants (for epilepsy etc)
- Babies born prematurely, before 37 weeks of pregnancy
- Babies who have had a complication at birth. e.g forceps delivery
- Babies with liver disorders
- Babies who fail to take or find it hard to feed
- Babies who are ill for other reasons

### **Is Vitamin K safe to give to babies?**

Yes, In 1997, a joint expert group of the Medicines Control Agency, Committee of Safety of Medicines and the Department of Health considered that the available evidence and data suggested vitamin K is safe to use. Though it is not possible to exclude a small increase in Leukaemia due to limitations to the research data, the experts concluded that overall the available data does not support an increased risk of cancer, including leukaemia caused by Vitamin K.

### How is vitamin K given?

There are two methods of giving Vitamin K to your baby.

- By injection
- By mouth

The Department of Obstetricians and Gynaecology and Children and Young people's services at The Rotherham Hospital NHS foundation Trust, Department of Health (DoH), National institute of clinical excellence (NICE) recommend that all babies should receive a single dose of Vitamin K at birth by an injection in the thigh.

You may decide that your baby should not receive Vitamin K, or may prefer a different course. You have a choice not to opt for the injection at birth. In that case, we recommend your baby is given Vitamin K by mouth (oral) at birth.

### Disadvantages of oral route

1. There is evidence that oral route is not as effective as injection.
2. If you are breastfeeding your baby, to get enough protection from oral Vitamin K, 2 further doses will be needed, at age 4 to 7 days and at age 4 weeks. If your baby is bottle fed, no further doses are necessary after the first dose at birth.

**If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your Midwife or contact the Community Midwifery Office on 01709 427253.**

## How to contact us

### Switchboard

Telephone 01709 820000

## Useful contact numbers

### NHS Direct

Telephone 0845 4647

### Health Info

Telephone 01709 427190

### Stop Smoking Service

Telephone 01709 422444

### Patient Services

Telephone 01709 424461

### A&E

Telephone 01709 424455

### For GP out of hours, contact your surgery

## Useful websites

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

[www.therotherhamft.nhs.uk](http://www.therotherhamft.nhs.uk)

[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

## Useful resources

Birth to five (2007 edition)

Care of women and their babies  
in the first six weeks (NICE 2008)

## We value your comments

If you have any comments or  
concerns about the care we have  
provided please let us know, or  
alternatively you can write to:

Patient Services

### The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust

Rotherham Hospital

Moorgate Road

Oakwood

Rotherham

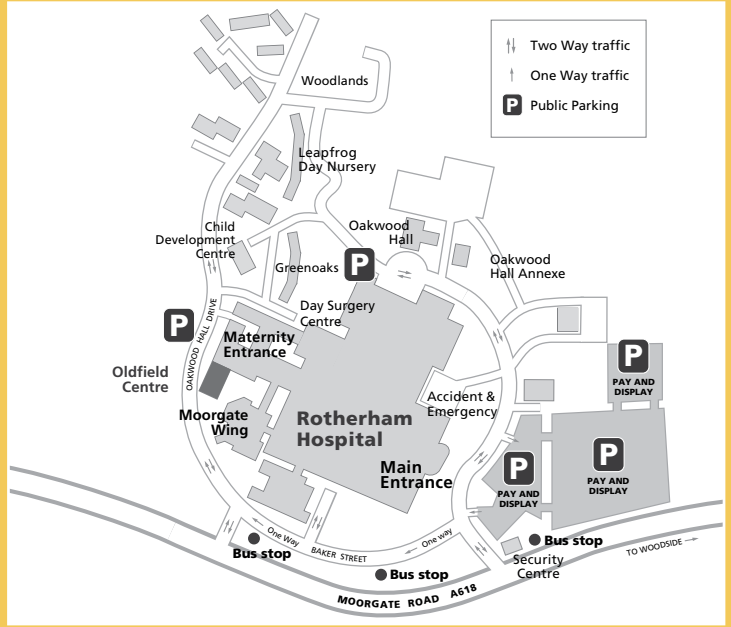
S60 2UD

Telephone 01709 424461

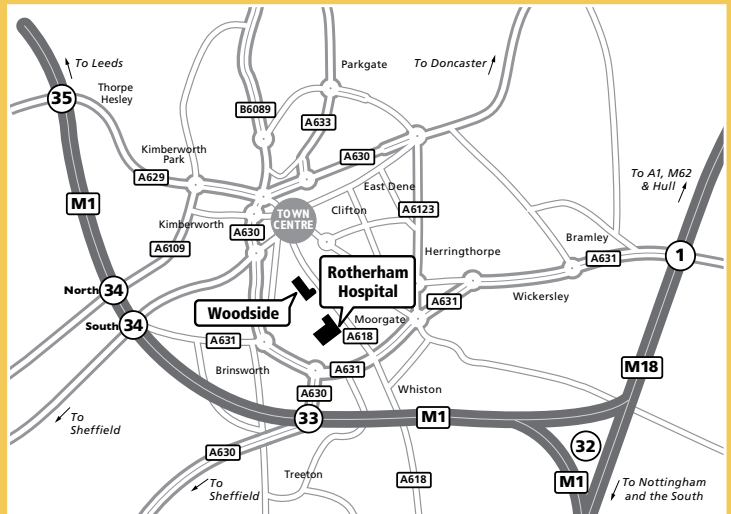
Email [complaints@rothgen.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints@rothgen.nhs.uk)

# How to find us

## Hospital site plan



## Rotherham main routes





LS 387 05/13 V5 WFO



The Rotherham **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

**Rotherham Hospital**  
Moorgate Road  
Oakwood  
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S60 2UD

Telephone 01709 820000  
[www.therotherhamft.nhs.uk](http://www.therotherhamft.nhs.uk)

