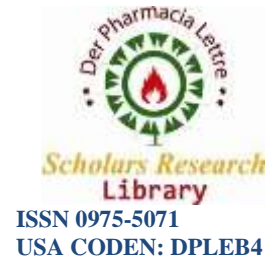


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Identifying the Causes, Symptoms and Treatment of Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding

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DESCRIPTION

Vitamin K is a fat-soluble vitamin that plays a crucial role in blood clotting, bone health, and various other physiological processes. Vitamin K deficiency can lead to a condition known as "Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding" (VKDB), which is a serious and potentially life-threatening disorder. In this article, we will explore the causes, symptoms, and treatment of VKDB, focusing on the importance of this often overlooked nutrient.

Causes of Vitamin K deficiency

Vitamin K deficiency can occur due to several factors:

Dietary insufficiency: Inadequate intake of vitamin K-rich foods, such as leafy greens (kale, spinach, broccoli), fish, meat, and dairy products, can lead to a deficiency. This is more common in individuals with restricted diets or malnutrition.

Malabsorption: Certain medical conditions or surgical procedures can impair the absorption of vitamin K from the digestive tract. Conditions like celiac disease, Crohn's disease, and cystic fibrosis can disrupt the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins, including vitamin K.

Medications: Some medications, such as certain antibiotics and blood thinners (like warfarin), can interfere with vitamin K metabolism, leading to lower levels of active vitamin K in the body.

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Liver disease: The liver plays a key role in processing and activating vitamin K. Liver diseases, such as cirrhosis, can disrupt this process and lead to vitamin K deficiency.

Newborns: Infants are at risk of VKDB because vitamin K does not pass through the placenta efficiently. Additionally, the gut microbiota of newborns is not fully developed, reducing their ability to synthesize vitamin K.

Types of VKDB

Vitamin K Deficiency Bleeding is typically classified into three main types, each occurring at different stages of life:

Early-onset VKDB: This type primarily affects newborns during the first week of life. It is often severe and can lead to bleeding in various parts of the body, including the brain. To prevent this, newborns are routinely given a vitamin K injection shortly after birth.

Classical VKDB: Classical VKDB occurs in infants aged 2 to 12 weeks who did not receive a vitamin K injection at birth. Bleeding can occur in various areas, such as the gastrointestinal tract or the nose.

Late-onset VKDB: Late-onset VKDB can occur in older infants, children, and adults. It is often milder and may not be recognized until a bleeding episode occurs. This type can result from various factors, including poor dietary intake, medication use, or underlying medical conditions.

The symptoms of VKDB can vary depending on the type and severity of the deficiency. Common symptoms include bleeding, which is the primary symptom of VKDB and can manifest as nosebleeds, bleeding gums, blood in the stool or urine, or excessive bruising. In newborns with VKDB, jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes) may be a prominent sign. Infants with VKDB may become unusually irritable and fussy. In severe cases, VKDB can lead to weakness and even paralysis.

Treatment and prevention

The treatment and prevention of VKDB depend on the type and severity of the deficiency.

Prevention in newborns: Newborns are routinely given a vitamin K injection shortly after birth to prevent early-onset VKDB. This has significantly reduced the incidence of this type of bleeding.

Treatment for VKDB in infants and children: In cases of VKDB in infants and children, treatment typically involves vitamin K supplementation. This can be administered orally or, in severe cases, intravenously. The oral treatment is highly effective and safe.

Treatment for VKDB in adults: In adults, the treatment of VKDB is also vitamin K supplementation, typically in the form of an injection or oral tablets. The underlying cause of the deficiency, such as malabsorption or liver disease, should also be addressed.

Dietary changes: Increasing the intake of vitamin K-rich foods can help prevent and manage vitamin K deficiency in individuals with dietary insufficiency.

Vitamin K deficiency bleeding is a serious condition that can have severe consequences if left untreated. It can affect individuals at various stages of life, from newborns to adults, and may result from dietary insufficiency, malabsorption, medications, or underlying medical conditions. Early diagnosis and treatment are crucial to prevent complications. For newborns, routine vitamin K administration at birth has significantly reduced the incidence of early-onset VKDB. In older individuals, treatment typically involves vitamin K supplementation, which is effective and safe. Maintaining a well-balanced diet rich in vitamin K-containing foods is also essential to prevent vitamin K deficiency and ensure overall health.