

Your Health: Vitamin K



Your body needs vitamin K to clot blood and help keep your bones healthy. It is found in leafy green vegetables, meat, and dairy products. Your body also produces some vitamin K on its own.

High or low levels of vitamin K

Low levels of vitamin K are rare. Most people get plenty of vitamin K from the foods they eat. However, low levels can be caused by certain liver or intestinal problems.

If your vitamin K levels are too low, you may bruise or bleed easily.

Healthy bacteria in your intestine also make vitamin K. If you take antibiotics for a long time, they may destroy these bacteria and cut off this source of vitamin K. If you are on antibiotics for a long time, be sure to eat plenty of foods with vitamin K.

Too much vitamin K is usually only a problem if you are taking blood-thinning medicines.

Vitamin K and blood thinners

Vitamin K levels affect how well blood thinners work. Also called anticoagulants, blood thinners keep your blood from clotting too easily. Too much or too little vitamin K can keep these drugs from working correctly.

If you are taking blood thinners, talk to your doctor to see if you need to make any changes to your diet. Most people who take blood-thinning medicines can eat a normal, healthy diet. But it is important not to suddenly change your diet so that you are eating a lot more or a lot less food rich in vitamin K.

If you have questions about foods with vitamin K, ask if your doctor can refer you to a registered dietitian, an expert in healthy eating.

Foods high in vitamin K

Foods high in vitamin K:

- Cooked leafy green vegetables, such as kale, spinach, turnip greens, collard greens, Swiss chard, and mustard greens (1 serving is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
- Fresh parsley ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)

If you take blood thinners, limit these foods to 1 serving a day.

Foods moderately high in vitamin K:

- Fresh leafy green vegetables, such as raw spinach, green leaf lettuce, romaine lettuce, and endive (1 serving is 1 cup)
- Raw broccoli (1 cup)
- Brussels sprouts ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)

If you take blood thinners, limit these foods to 3 servings a day.

It is important to keep constant the amount of vitamin K you get from food. If you eat lots of foods high in vitamin K, then your blood-thinner

dose will be set based on that. Do not suddenly change the amount of vitamin K you eat.

Questions to ask your doctor

List your questions or concerns below. Take this sheet with you to your next doctor visit.

Questions about vitamin K: