

Hepatitis B Vaccine

Protect Your Baby for Life

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus. Some people are able to recover from their infection. For others, the virus remains in their bodies and becomes a chronic, or lifelong, infection. Left untreated, about 1 in 4 children who have chronic hepatitis B will eventually die of health problems related to their infection, such as liver damage, liver disease, or liver cancer.

How is hepatitis B spread?

The hepatitis B virus is spread when someone comes in contact with blood, semen, or other body fluids from an infected person. This can happen through:

- ▶ An infected mother passing it to her baby at birth
- ▶ Sex with an infected person
- ▶ Direct contact with an infected person, where blood is passed through breaks in the skin or soft tissues, such as the nose, mouth and eyes

Pregnant women should be tested for hepatitis B

Many women do not know they are infected and people with hepatitis B often have no symptoms. As a result, all pregnant women should get a blood test for hepatitis B as part of their prenatal care. The test is usually performed during the first prenatal visit. If a woman has not received prenatal care, she should be tested at the hospital before she delivers her baby.



Infants can develop a lifelong infection

When a pregnant woman has hepatitis B, it can be easily spread to her baby at birth. This can happen during a vaginal delivery or a c-section. Babies and young children can also get hepatitis B from close contact with family members or others who might be infected. When babies become infected with hepatitis B, they have about a 90% chance of developing a lifelong, chronic infection. Fortunately, there is a vaccine to prevent babies from getting hepatitis B.

Prevent hepatitis B. Get your baby vaccinated.

Vaccinate your baby

- ✓ Regardless of your hepatitis B test results, your baby should get the first shot of the hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth and at the latest by one month of age.
- ✓ After the first shot is given after birth, the next shot of the hepatitis B vaccine is usually given at 1 to 2 months of age. The last shot is given between 6 months and 18 months of age.

The vaccine is given as 3 or 4 shots, depending on your baby's birth weight and the vaccine brand. Ask your doctor or nurse when your baby needs to come back for the next shot in the series. It is important to complete the vaccine series. The vaccine is safe and getting all the shots is up to 95% effective in preventing hepatitis B.



cdc.gov/hepatitis