

# Protect Your Baby for Life

When a Pregnant Woman Has Hepatitis B



## Why should pregnant women be concerned about Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease that can be easily passed to others. It is important for a woman to find out if she has Hepatitis B, so she can get medical care. It is also possible for a pregnant woman with Hepatitis B to pass the virus to her baby at birth. Fortunately, there is a vaccine to prevent babies from getting Hepatitis B.

## What is Hepatitis B?

“Hepatitis” means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease that results from infection with the Hepatitis B virus. When a person becomes infected, the Hepatitis B virus can stay in the person’s body for the rest of his or her life and cause serious liver problems.

## Can Hepatitis B be spread to babies?

Yes. The Hepatitis B virus can be spread to a baby during childbirth. This can happen during a vaginal delivery or a c-section.

## How else is Hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B can also be spread when blood, semen, or other bodily fluids from a person with the virus enter the body of someone who is not infected. The virus is very infectious and is passed easily through breaks in the skin or in soft tissues such as the nose, mouth, and eyes.

This can happen through direct contact with blood from an infected person, even in tiny amounts too small to see. Hepatitis B can also be spread through sex with an infected person.

**CDC recommends that babies get the HBIG shot and the first dose of Hepatitis B vaccine within 12 hours of being born.**

## How serious is Hepatitis B?

When babies become infected with Hepatitis B, they have a 90% chance of developing a lifelong, chronic infection. As many as 1 in 4 people with chronic Hepatitis B develop serious health problems. Hepatitis B can cause liver damage, liver disease, and liver cancer.

## How common is Hepatitis B?

About 350 million people worldwide and 1.2 million people in the United States are infected with Hepatitis B.

## Can doctors prevent a baby from getting Hepatitis B?

Yes. Babies born to women with Hepatitis B get two shots soon after birth. One is the first dose of the Hepatitis B vaccine and the other shot is called HBIG. The two shots help prevent the baby from getting Hepatitis B. The shots work best when they are given within 12 hours after being born.



## What is HBIG?

HBIG is a medicine that gives a baby’s body a “boost” or extra help to fight the virus as soon as he or she is born. The HBIG shot is only given to babies of mothers who have Hepatitis B.



## How can I make sure my family is protected from Hepatitis B?

### Get everyone tested for Hepatitis B

Your baby's father and everyone else who lives in your house should go to the doctor or clinic to be tested. Testing your family members helps to tell if they have Hepatitis B. If they do not have Hepatitis B, the doctor will talk to them about getting the Hepatitis B vaccine to protect them from getting the infection.

### Cover cuts and sores

Since Hepatitis B is spread through blood, people with Hepatitis B should be careful not to expose other people to things that could have their blood on them. It is important not to share personal items such as razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes, or glucose monitors. Cuts and sores should be covered while they are healing.

### Do not chew food for your baby

Tiny amounts of blood can sometimes be in a person's mouth. Do not pre-chew food before you feed it to your baby.

## How many Hepatitis B shots does my baby need?

Your baby will get 3 or 4 shots, depending on which brand of vaccine is used. After the first dose is given in the hospital, the next dose is given at 1-2 months of age. The last dose is usually given by the time your baby is one year old. Ask your doctor or nurse when your baby needs to come back for each shot.

## Does my baby need all the shots?

All the Hepatitis B shots are necessary to help keep your baby from getting Hepatitis B.

**Prevent Hepatitis B.  
Get your baby vaccinated.**

## How do I know my baby is protected?

After getting all the Hepatitis B shots, your doctor will test your baby's blood. The blood test tells you and your doctor that your baby is protected and does not have Hepatitis B. The blood test is usually done 1-2 months after the last shot. Be sure to bring your baby back to your doctor for this important blood test.

## Hepatitis B is not spread by:

### Breastfeeding

It is safe for you to breastfeed your baby. You cannot give your baby Hepatitis B from breast milk.

### Cooking and eating

It is safe for you to prepare and eat meals with your family. Hepatitis B is not spread by sharing dishes, cooking or eating utensils, or drinking glasses.

### Hugging and kissing

You can hug and kiss your baby, family members, or others close to you. You cannot give anyone Hepatitis B from hugging and kissing them. Also, Hepatitis B is not spread through sneezing or coughing.



## For more information

Talk to your health professional, call your health department, or visit [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis)



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Division of Viral Hepatitis

