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**Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH)
Hepatitis B Vaccine Guidance for Families of Infants and Young Children
December 2025**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is committed to making sure everyone in our state has easy access to vaccines that protect against serious diseases. One of the most important vaccines for young children is the hepatitis B vaccine, which protects the liver from long-term damage.

Why hepatitis B protection matters

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver. It can lead to serious long-term health problems, including liver failure, liver cancer, and even death.

Babies and young children are especially at risk because:

- They can get the virus at birth if the parent is infected.
- They can also get it later from close contact with someone who has hepatitis B, even if that person doesn't know they're infected.
- Babies who get hepatitis B are much more likely to develop lifelong infection.

Why getting a hepatitis B vaccine at birth is important

For more than 30 years, public health experts and pediatricians have recommended that **all newborns receive their first hepatitis B vaccine dose within 24 hours of birth**. Since then, hepatitis B infections in children and teens **have dropped by 99%**.

This vaccine has a long track record of being **safe and effective**. Hepatitis B vaccine will continue to be available through the Commonwealth's pediatric universal vaccine program that provides free vaccines for all children through 18 years of age.

Recent federal recommendation changes and what DPH recommends

In December 2025, a federal advisory group, the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) changed its recommendation regarding hepatitis B vaccination for infants

without presenting any new data or evidence to support a change. It now recommends that infants “may” receive the birth dose after “shared decision making” with a clinician. DPH reviewed the available evidence carefully and **found no new data showing that this change improves safety or protection**. Because the universal birth-dose approach has been so successful at preventing disease, DPH continues to recommend:

- **All newborns should receive a dose of hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth**, no matter the hepatitis B status of the birth parent.
- **If the birth parent has hepatitis B or their status is unknown, the baby should receive the vaccine within 12 hours.**
- Babies should complete the full 3 dose hepatitis B vaccine series by **18 months of age**.
- Blood testing should **not** be done to determine whether a child should complete the full 3 dose hepatitis B vaccine series. Blood tests in the middle of the vaccine series do **not** reliably show protection, so children still need all recommended doses.

Why completing the full series matters

Getting fewer than the recommended number of doses has not been proven to provide long-lasting protection. Completing the full vaccination series ensures that children stay protected as they grow.

Staying aligned with expert guidance

DPH’s guidance is based on the best available scientific data and aligns with:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics’ recommended vaccine schedule
- A consensus statement from the Northeast Public Health Collaborative, which is a partnership formed among several Northeastern states and cities that works to promote the practice evidence-based public health.

Thank you! DPH appreciates the continued partnership of families, healthcare providers, and community organizations in protecting the health of children across Massachusetts.