

## Why Do Babies Need the Hepatitis B Vaccine?

Hepatitis B is a virus that can damage the liver and lead to lifelong health problems. The hepatitis B vaccine prevents short-term illness (acute hepatitis) and a life-threatening infection called chronic hepatitis B ([/English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/Pages/Hepatitis.aspx](#)).

Newborns need the hepatitis B vaccine soon after birth. That's because they could be unknowingly exposed to the virus during labor or shortly after coming home.



Other family members or caregivers can give hepatitis B to newborns. People often don't know they are infected with the virus because they may look and feel healthy.

Children infected at birth and in early childhood are much more likely to get chronic hepatitis B than adults. The majority (90%) of infants infected at birth develop chronic hepatitis. That's why babies benefit most when they get the vaccine early, during the first 24 hours of life.

### Where we stand: hepatitis B vaccine for newborns

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) believes that a federal advisory panel's decision to weaken hepatitis B vaccine recommendations for newborns is dangerous and could put children at risk. AAP **still strongly recommends** (<https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2025/hepatitis-b-immunization-is-critical-to-protect-all-newborns/>) that all babies get a first dose of hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth as part of routine care.

### How does hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B spreads when blood or other body fluids with the virus get into the body of someone who isn't infected. The virus can survive for up to 7 days in dried blood particles on surfaces and objects. This includes personal items people use regularly and sometimes share.

### People can become infected with hep B through:

- Birth (if a pregnant person has hepatitis B, their baby can become infected)
- Sharing items such as razors or toothbrushes with an infected person
- Contact with the blood, open sores or saliva with traces of blood of an infected person
- Sex with an infected partner
- Exposure to blood from needlesticks or other sharp instruments. This can include equipment used for tattoos ([/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/Tattoos.aspx](#)) or piercings ([/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/body-ercings.aspx](#)) that were not properly sanitized.

Most people with chronic hepatitis do not have symptoms, but the effects are serious. The disease can cause liver damage, liver cancer and death. [Back to Top](#)

The good news is that most people who get vaccinated against hepatitis B are immune for life. The vaccine is over 95% effective ([https://publications.aap.org/redbook/book/347/chapter/5752538/Hepatitis-B?\\_gl=1%2a1vuifb3%2a\\_ga%2aMTA4MDkxODkzNi4xNzI5MTkxNjQy%2a\\_ga\\_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aczE3NTgwMzkyODAKbzY4JGcxJHQxNzU4MDQwNjYxJGozOSRsMCRoMA..](https://publications.aap.org/redbook/book/347/chapter/5752538/Hepatitis-B?_gl=1%2a1vuifb3%2a_ga%2aMTA4MDkxODkzNi4xNzI5MTkxNjQy%2a_ga_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aczE3NTgwMzkyODAKbzY4JGcxJHQxNzU4MDQwNjYxJGozOSRsMCRoMA..)) at preventing this disease in children and adults.

## Why the hepatitis B vaccine for babies is important

Babies have incredible immune systems, ready to learn as soon as they are born.

### How the birth dose benefits newborns

They receive the first dose (</English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Your-Babys-First-Vaccines.aspx>) of hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth. The vaccine teaches their immune system how to recognize and resist the virus faster than the virus can multiply and cause disease.

***Watch this video to hear how getting the hepatitis B vaccine early helps avoid infection and health problems like liver disease and liver cancer.***

Immunity at Birth? The Power of the Hepatitis B Vaccination | AAP



The first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine protects newborns from possible exposures during delivery (</English/ages-stages/prenatal/delivery-beyond/Pages/Delivery-Room-Procedures-Following-a-Normal-Vaginal-Birth.aspx>) and the first few days of life. It provides a safety net for babies whose family members may not know they are infected with hepatitis B. Testing for hepatitis B during pregnancy or delivery can be helpful, but sometimes results aren't ready in time or the test may miss an infection.

Sadly, 25% of babies ([https://publications.aap.org/redbook/book/347/chapter/5752538/Hepatitis-B?\\_gl=1%2a1yq9507%2a\\_ga%2aMzk4NTc1NTg4LjE3NDg5NzU2ODg.%2a\\_ga\\_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aczE3NTgwMzk2NDckbzIxOSRnMSR0MTc1ODAOmJUZnCRqNDgkbDAkaDA.](https://publications.aap.org/redbook/book/347/chapter/5752538/Hepatitis-B?_gl=1%2a1yq9507%2a_ga%2aMzk4NTc1NTg4LjE3NDg5NzU2ODg.%2a_ga_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aczE3NTgwMzk2NDckbzIxOSRnMSR0MTc1ODAOmJUZnCRqNDgkbDAkaDA.)) who get chronic hepatitis B die. In high-risk deliveries, the baby may receive a dose of hepatitis B immune globulin (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK500808/>) in addition to vaccine. This gives the immune system extra antibodies that protect the baby for a few weeks.

### When should the the next doses of hepatitis B vaccine be given?

Babies get a second dose of hepatitis B vaccine when they are 1 month to 2 months old and the third dose when they are 6 months to 18 months old.

abies complete all their doses, they live a life free from hepatitis B liver damage.

Hepatitis B vaccine can be combined (</English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Multiple-Vaccinations-at-One-Time.aspx>) Back to Top

[\\_gl=1%2ag2ma5z%2a\\_ga%2aMzk4NTc1NTg4LjE3NDg5NzU2ODg.%2a\\_ga\\_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aczE3NTQ1NzQ4MDAkbzEOMyRnMSROMTc1NDU3NTY5MSRqNjAkbdAkaDA.](#)) safely with other vaccines in the same shot. It can also be one of several shots for different vaccines received in the same visit to the doctor.

## Other simple steps to protect your newborn

Along with the first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine, a few routine steps after birth help prevent newborn health problems. Babies receive a dose of **vitamin K to avoid dangerous bleeding** (</English/ages-stages/prenatal/delivery-beyond/Pages/Where-We-Stand-Administration-of-Vitamin-K.aspx>). They also get antibiotic **eye ointment** (</English/ages-stages/prenatal/delivery-beyond/Pages/Erythromycin-Ointment.aspx>) to prevent infections from bacteria during delivery. Some might also need the **RSV immunization** (</English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/RSV-immunizations-new-ways-to-protect-babies.aspx>) before leaving the hospital, depending on the season and other factors. *Learn more about what to expect after delivery* [here](/English/ages-stages/prenatal/delivery-beyond/Pages/Delivery-Room-Procedures-Following-a-Normal-Vaginal-Birth.aspx) (</English/ages-stages/prenatal/delivery-beyond/Pages/Delivery-Room-Procedures-Following-a-Normal-Vaginal-Birth.aspx>).

## Hepatitis B vaccine for pregnant people

People are tested for hepatitis B during each pregnancy (<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/viral-hepatitis-in-pregnancy>). Testing may be done during labor and delivery at the hospital. Hepatitis B vaccine can be given to someone during pregnancy if they have not been vaccinated.

If you're an expecting parent with questions about the vaccine, talk with your OB/GYN and pediatrician before your baby is born.

## Talk with your doctor

Tell your doctor if someone getting the hepatitis B vaccine has any life-threatening allergies. Do the same if you are sick. People with minor illnesses, like a cold, can get vaccinated.

You and your doctor will evaluate your situation. You can discuss testing and preventing hepatitis B through vaccination.

## Possible effects after vaccination

Occasionally, people have redness, swelling or feel soreness where they received the shot. A few babies might get a fever (</English/tips-tools/symptom-checker/Pages/symptomviewer.aspx?symptom=Fever+%280-12+Months%29#%3a~%3atext=Call%20Your%20Doctor%20If%3a&text=Fever%20goes%20higher%20than%2010%2cthan%203%20days%20%2872%20hours%29>). For any signs that concern you, call your doctor.

If someone has a serious reaction to a vaccine, there are two government agencies that monitor vaccine reactions and safety through the Vaccine Adverse Reporting System (VAERS (</English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/vaccine-studies-examine-the-evidence.aspx#%3a~%3atext=vaccine%2c%20they%20can-%2creport%2c-it%20to%20the>)).

## More information

- [How Do Children Get Hepatitis?](/English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/Pages/Hepatitis.aspx) (</English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/Pages/Hepatitis.aspx>)
- [What to Expect in the Delivery Room After Your Baby is Born](/English/ages-stages/prenatal/delivery-beyond/Pages/Delivery-Room-Procedures-Following-a-Normal-Vaginal-Birth.aspx) (</English/ages-stages/prenatal/delivery-beyond/Pages/Delivery-Room-Procedures-Following-a-Normal-Vaginal-Birth.aspx>)
- [Vaccines Your Child Needs By Age 6](/English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Your-Babys-First-Vaccines.aspx) (</English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Your-Babys-First-Vaccines.aspx>)

- **Fact Checked: Hepatitis B Vaccine Given to Newborns Reduces Risk of Chronic Infection** Back to Top  
 (https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/fact-checked/fact-checked-hepatitis-b-vaccine-given-to-newborns-reduces-risk-of-chronic-infection/?\_gl=1%2a1sx0dvm%2a\_ga%2aMTM4ODE3NTcwMi4xNzI2MjM5MjYx%2a\_ga\_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aczE3NjQ3OTUzNjAkbzExMDckZzEkdDE3NjQ4MDQzNDAkajI5JGwwJGgw#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20has%20made%20significant%2c%20hepatitis%20B%20infections%20throughout%20childhood.) (AAP.org)
- **AAP: Hepatitis B Immunization is Critical to Protect All Newborns** (https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2025/hepatitis-b-immunization-is-critical-to-protect-all-newborns/?\_gl=1%2ag2mi4u%2a\_ga%2aMTM4ODE3NTcwMi4xNzI2MjM5MjYx%2a\_ga\_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aczE3NjQ5NjAyMTQkbzExMTUkZzEkdDE3NjQ5NjIwMTMkajU5JGwwJGgw)

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