



UK Health
Security
Agency

NHS

Protecting your baby against

hepatitis B

with the hepatitis B vaccine

immunisation

the safest way to protect yourself
and your baby



Hepatitis B infection and the risk to your baby

Each year in the UK, around 2,000 babies are born to women who have hepatitis B infection. This infection is caused by a virus that is spread through blood and attacks the liver.

During childbirth, your baby is in contact with your blood so there is a chance that the virus is passed on to your baby. If this happens, your baby could become infected. Nine out of 10 infected babies will develop chronic (long-lasting) infection.

This can lead to liver disease such as scarring of the liver (cirrhosis) and liver cancer – which both stop the liver from working properly.

Hepatitis B infection can be prevented by vaccination.

How you can protect your baby

Talk to your midwife and register your baby with a GP as soon as you can so that their vaccines can be ordered – see page 6. Make sure that your baby:



has their vaccines at the right age from birth



completes the full course of vaccines



has a blood test for infection when they reach one year old

Hepatitis B vaccine can protect your baby

A complete course of 6 doses of vaccines will fully protect your baby against long lasting (chronic) hepatitis B infection. The initial doses of vaccine are given as small injections into the thigh. The last dose is given when your child is 18 months of age and will be given into their arm.

Your midwife will know that your baby should have the first dose of hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth

Your baby may also need hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) at the same time as their birth dose of vaccine, if there is a higher risk of infection. Your midwife will tell you if it is needed. HBIG is also given as an injection in the thigh.



Completing the full course of vaccines

The second dose of single hepatitis B vaccine needs to be given at 4 weeks old.

The remaining four doses of hepatitis B vaccine are given in a combined vaccine to all babies at 8, 12, 16 weeks and 18 months old. This vaccine also protects against other serious infections including diphtheria, tetanus, polio, whooping cough and haemophilus influenzae type B.

If you are not able to attend any of the appointments, please let your GP surgery know as soon as possible so that another appointment can be arranged.

Testing your baby for infection

Each year, a very small number of babies may develop infection so your baby will be offered a blood test when they are between one year and 18 months old. This is to check that the course of vaccines have prevented them from developing hepatitis B.

There are two ways that this may be done and your GP, health visitor, practice nurse or community vaccination service will advise you which test your baby will have:

1. a heel prick dried blood spot (DBS) test where a sharp point is used to make a small prick in your baby's heel and a few drops of blood are dropped onto a card which is sent off for testing.
2. blood test taken from a vein in your baby's arm or hand.

If they do have the infection, they will be referred to a specialist for treatment to reduce their risk of developing serious liver disease.

If a young child has hepatitis B infection, they are more likely to develop chronic infection without any signs or symptoms. **So even if your child has no signs or symptoms of infection they should still have the blood test.**

Infection can be prevented in 90% of babies if the first dose of vaccine is given at birth and the full vaccine course is completed on time.



Register your baby with a GP as soon as possible to ensure they receive their vaccines at the right time

You can find a list of local GPs by visiting
www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-GP

Home birth

If you had your baby at home, check with your midwife that they have ordered the first dose of vaccine (and immunoglobulin if needed) for your baby so it is given within 24 hours of birth.

Moving house

If you move house, it is very important that you let your health visitor know and that you register your baby with a new GP as soon as possible so that they can complete their course of vaccines.

Tell your new GP that your baby needs to complete a course of hepatitis B vaccination and have a blood test between one year and 18 months of age because they may have been in contact with the virus at birth.

Moving to another country

If you are moving abroad before your baby is 18 months old, please let your GP know and don't forget to register your baby with a new family doctor in your new country of residence.

Take your baby's Red Book with you and make sure your baby receives all of the hepatitis B vaccines on time. They will also need their blood test between one year and 18 months of age.

Babies that need to stay in hospital

If your baby needs to stay in hospital they should receive the second dose of vaccine when they reach 4 weeks old and then continue to follow the schedule on page 7.

Keep a record of your baby's appointments and vaccination dates below.

These will also be recorded by your midwife, health visitor, practice nurse and GP in your baby's Red Book (Personal Child Health Record)

Appointment date	Age due	Vaccine	Date vaccine given
	Birth	Single dose of hepatitis B vaccine	
	HBIG (if required)		
	4 weeks	Single dose of hepatitis B vaccine	
	8 weeks	Routine childhood vaccines (contains hepatitis B protection)	
	12 weeks	Routine childhood vaccines (contains hepatitis B protection)	
	16 weeks	Routine childhood vaccines (contains hepatitis B protection)	
	Between one year and 18 months	Blood test to check if your child has acquired hepatitis B infection	
	18 months	Routine childhood vaccines (contains hepatitis B protection)	

If you have questions you can speak to your midwife, health visitor, practice nurse or GP.

Reminder

**Bring your child's
Red Book (PCHR)
to every appointment**



It is essential that your baby receives all of the doses in the table below at the right age to protect them from infection

Age due	Vaccine
Birth	Single dose of hepatitis B vaccine
4 weeks	Single dose of hepatitis B vaccine
8 weeks	Routine childhood vaccines (contains hepatitis B protection)
12 weeks	Routine childhood vaccines (contains hepatitis B protection)
16 weeks	Routine childhood vaccines (contains hepatitis B protection)
Between one year and 18 months of age	Blood test to check if your child has acquired hepatitis B infection
18 months	Routine childhood vaccines (contains hepatitis B protection)



**Keep your baby up to date
with their vaccines.**

Further information about hepatitis B is also available at:

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/conditions/hepatitis-b

Children's Liver Disease Foundation

General enquiries: 0121 212 3839
www.childliverdisease.org

Email: info@childliverdisease.org

British Liver Trust

General enquiries: 01425 481320
www.britishlivertrust.org.uk
Helpline enquiries:
helpline@britishlivertrust.org.uk



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HEPB25PYB 100K JUN 2025
UKHSA gateway number 2025130