

# Hepatitis B vaccination for babies

Hepatitis B is very infectious and spread by the blood, semen, or vaginal fluid of infected people. It can cause long term liver disease, such as cirrhosis (liver scarring), liver failure and cancer.

All pregnant women should be screened for hepatitis B as part of their pregnancy care. This is done through a blood test.

Hepatitis B vaccination is the best way to prevent the disease.

## Hepatitis B vaccine for babies

About 90% of babies who become infected with hepatitis B at birth or soon after will develop hepatitis B for life.

Hepatitis B vaccine protects babies long-term. The vaccine is **free** for babies.

All babies are offered the hepatitis B vaccine at birth to:

- help prevent the spread of the disease from an infected mother to her baby. Sometimes a mother may not know she has the disease; and
- prevent the spread of the disease to an infant from infected people. For example, those who live in the same house or others who might be infected.

It's recommended that all babies are vaccinated against hepatitis B at birth (or within 7 days of being born). Babies should also receive hepatitis B vaccine at 6 weeks, 4 months and 6 months of age.

It is essential that the full course of hepatitis B vaccines is completed for long term protection.

Babies can still be breastfed as they receive their hepatitis B vaccine doses.

Hepatitis B vaccine is given in combination with other vaccines on the [NSW immunisation schedule](#). [On-time vaccination](#) is a baby's best protection against preventable and serious diseases.

All vaccines given to children in Australia are tested to make sure they are safe and effective.

## Babies born to hepatitis B positive mothers

A baby born to a mother who has tested positive for hepatitis B needs another injection at birth, called 'hepatitis b immunoglobulin', as well as their hepatitis B vaccination, to prevent hepatitis B.

A baby born to a mother who has tested positive for hepatitis B will still need to have 3 more hepatitis B vaccine doses to make sure that they don't get hepatitis B. They also need a blood test 3-12 months after completing the vaccination course to check they are protected.

Parents or carer should speak to their healthcare provider for more information and advice.

A person who has hepatitis B who is pregnant may be recommended to have treatment during pregnancy to reduce the risk of transmitting hepatitis B to their baby. Anyone who is pregnant who knows that they have hepatitis B should tell their doctor about their hepatitis B infection.