

Protecting your baby against Hepatitis B

How can I protect my baby against hepatitis B virus?

- It is important to protect all babies from the hepatitis B virus. To be fully protected, babies need three doses of the hepatitis B vaccine early in life.
- Babies should get the first dose of the vaccine at birth, a second dose at 2 months of age, and a third dose at 6 months of age.
- When given all three doses, hepatitis B vaccine gives complete protection to young children.



Why should babies be vaccinated against hepatitis B disease?

- Children infected at birth, or at a very young age, are likely to become carriers. A carrier is someone who cannot get rid of the virus from their body.
- Even though carriers may look and feel well, they can spread the virus to other people. Carriers are likely to suffer liver damage and liver cancer, and die at a young age. That is why it is so important to immunize your baby against hepatitis B early in life.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Hepatitis B is a silent disease, meaning that it often does not have any signs or symptoms.
- If a person does have signs and symptoms, they can include feeling tired or feeling like they need to vomit, not wanting to eat or drink, and/or the skin and eyes turning yellow, and pain throughout the body.



How does hepatitis B spread to babies or young children?

- From the blood of an infected mother during birth (please see below for more information).
- Being cared for by an infected person through bodily fluids (such as blood, including menstrual blood, semen, and fluid from the vagina).



How can I track my baby's immunizations?

- Your child's record may also be found in the Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR). Visit <https://www.dhswir.org> and scroll down to the Public Immunization Record Access.
- Bring this record with you every time you visit your doctor or public health department for shots.



What do pregnant women need to know?

- A pregnant woman may be carrying the hepatitis B virus and not know it. She can pass the virus to her baby during birth.
- Pregnant women should be tested for hepatitis B at least once during every pregnancy. The hospital where a woman gives birth should know the results of the test, passed on to her baby. If she is a carrier, the hospital staff will need to take steps to prevent the virus from being passed on to the baby.
- These steps include giving the baby certain medications and the hepatitis B vaccine within 12 hours after birth.

