

How long does the protection last for my baby?

There is good evidence to show that babies who have been fully immunised against hepatitis B will have long-lasting protection.

Are there any side effects to the vaccine?

The birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine is very well tolerated by newborn babies. The most common side effects of the vaccine are minor and resolve quickly. These include soreness at the injection site, mild fever and joint pain.

Your baby may also be irritable or refuse feeds for a short time. Serious side effects are very rare.

If you are concerned about your baby's health after an immunisation consult your midwife, doctor or immunisation provider.

What if my baby is unwell?

The vaccine will be postponed if your baby is unwell or has a high temperature of more than 38.5°C.

Where can I get more information?

- > Speak to your doctor, midwife or immunisation provider
- > Contact the Immunisation Section, SA Health Monday to Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm, on 1300 232 272
- > National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance www.ncirs.edu.au

References

NHMRC, the Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition.

<http://immunise.health.gov.au/>

NCIRS Hepatitis B vaccines for Australians:

www.ncirs.edu.au

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Hepatitis B and the vaccine; fact sheet for parents

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hepb/fs-parents.html>

If you require this information in an alternative language or format please contact SA Health on the details provided below and they will make every effort to assist you.

For more information

SA Health
PO Box 6 Rundle Mall
Adelaide SA 5000
Telephone: 1300 232 272
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation



www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons

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SA Health



Hepatitis B
 vaccination at birth:
 Why your baby
 needs it



Government
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What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is the most common liver infection in the world and is caused by the hepatitis B virus.

When a person is first infected with the virus they develop a short term or acute infection. Acute hepatitis B refers to the first six months after someone is infected with the hepatitis B virus. Some of the symptoms of acute hepatitis B infection are tiredness, nausea, vomiting, yellow skin and eyes. Infected children under the age of five rarely show any symptoms.

Some people can fight the infection and recover from the virus but others, especially babies and young children, are not able to clear the infection and it remains lifelong. Chronic hepatitis B refers to the infection that remains after six months. Nine out of ten children infected with the virus will become chronically infected, also known as hepatitis B carriers.

Chronic hepatitis B can lead to liver cancer and liver failure later in life.

Hepatitis means 'inflammation of the liver'

How is hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B is spread by coming into contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids, even if the person has no symptoms.

Babies and children can get hepatitis B:

- > at birth from their infected mother
- > by blood exposure to minor breaks in the skin or mucous membranes (eg. inside lining of the nose and mouth)
- > by sharing personal items used by an infected person (eg. toothbrush or razor)
- > from food that was chewed (for a baby) by an infected person
- > by being bitten by an infected person

The virus can survive outside the body for up to seven days and can be spread from objects, like toys, if they have been contaminated with blood from an infected person.

How can I protect my baby from hepatitis B?

You can protect your baby from hepatitis B with a safe and effective vaccine. This vaccine has been given to children around the world, and in Australia, for many years. It is a very effective vaccine, providing protection in most cases. No vaccine is 100% effective.

The hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for all babies at birth or soon after birth and is included on the childhood immunisation schedule at six weeks, four and six months of age.



Why do all newborns need the hepatitis B vaccine before they leave hospital?

In Australia all babies are recommended to have hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth. This provides the best way of treating a baby that may have contracted the virus from the mother during the birth. Ninety per cent of those infected at birth will have the virus in their body for life. Receiving the vaccine at birth provides the baby with the best chance of clearing the virus. The birth dose will also protect your baby from hepatitis B virus until they are old enough to receive the routine childhood immunisations at six weeks of age.

What if my baby does not have the hepatitis B vaccine at birth?

The vaccine provides the best protection when given in the first 24 hours after birth if the baby is infected with the virus, but it can be given up to seven days of age.

If your baby did not get the hepatitis B vaccine in the first seven days, then it is important that your baby receive their routine childhood immunisations at six weeks of age to provide protection as early as possible.

How many doses of the hepatitis B vaccine does my baby need?

With your consent, your baby will be given one dose of hepatitis B vaccine, preferably within 24 hours of birth. Your baby will then be given three more doses of the vaccine (in combination) at six weeks, four and six months of age as part of their childhood immunisation schedule.

Premature babies born less than 32 weeks gestation or weighing less than 2000 grams at birth will need an extra dose at 12 months of age. Ask your doctor or nurse if you think your baby will need an extra dose of hepatitis B vaccine.