

Should I get tested for hepatitis B if I am pregnant?

ALL pregnant women should be tested by their doctors. But women of Asian descent must be sure to ask their doctor for the simple blood test since they are at much higher risk for hepatitis B infection.

If I am pregnant, should I get vaccinated?

Talk to your doctor about the hepatitis B vaccine. If your blood tests show that you do not have hepatitis B, then he or she may want to wait until after the baby is born. If your husband or sexual partner has hepatitis B, if you live in close contact with a family member who has hepatitis B, or you have a job that places you at high risk for infection, then your doctor may want to start the vaccine. But this is a decision you must make with your doctor.

If I have hepatitis B, will my unborn baby be affected?

Hepatitis B does not usually affect the health of your unborn baby. And most pregnant women with hepatitis B do not have any problems. But, it is important for the doctor to know whether you have hepatitis B so they can watch you closely throughout your pregnancy.

If I have hepatitis B, how can I infect my newborn baby?

You can pass the virus on to your newborn baby during delivery. When a woman goes into labor, there is a massive exchange of blood -- the virus is passed in the mother's blood to the newborn through the umbilical cord. The blood exchange occurs before delivery. Therefore, you cannot prevent infecting your newborn by choosing to have a C-section. The hepatitis B virus is passed whether you give birth naturally or through surgery.

Why is it so serious if my newborn is infected with hepatitis B?

Newborns who are exposed to hepatitis B have more than a 90% chance of becoming chronically infected. Their immune systems are not able to get rid of the virus, so they can become a "chronic carrier". This means the virus stays in their liver for a long time. They can pass the virus on to others. They will also live with a greater chance of developing serious liver disease later in life.

If I have hepatitis B, what can I do to protect my newborn?

The good news is that there is a vaccine to protect your newborn baby. But you have to make your newborn is vaccinated in the delivery room.

- 1.** Make sure to remind your doctor several weeks before you deliver to order the **hepatitis B vaccine** and if possible, one dose of **hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBiG)**. Your doctor has many things on his mind, so he may forget to order these drugs. If the HBiG drug is not available, don't get upset. HBiG is a drug that can help increase the effectiveness of the vaccine, but it is not as important as the vaccine itself.
- 2.** Tell your doctor that you want the hepatitis B vaccine and HBiG to be given to your baby in the delivery room. This request is to make certain the doctor or nurse doesn't forget to give your new baby the two drugs right after delivery. Ask your partner or husband to make sure that these drugs are given since you may be too tired to ask.

Why should my baby be vaccinated in the delivery room?

To protect your baby from a chronic infection, **the vaccine must be given within the FIRST 12 HOURS OF LIFE**. This is a very small window of opportunity. You don't get a second chance! If the vaccine is given within the first 12 hours of life, then your baby has a greater than 90% chance of being protected from the hepatitis B virus. If the vaccine is not given correctly, then your baby will most likely become chronically infected with hepatitis B for a lifetime.

Where can I get more information about testing and hepatitis B?

You can ask your family doctor, the local health department, or a liver specialist to order the simple hepatitis B blood test. This blood test can be done in any doctor's office.

You can also call **1-888-888-0981**, which is the GlaxoSmithKline HBV Information and Assistance telephone helpline. This is a free phone call. Information about HBV and physician referrals across the country are available in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese. If you speak English, please contact the Hepatitis B Foundation at 215-489-4900 or email us at info@hepb.org.