

Hepatitis B Vaccine Talking Points

Amid declining U.S. childhood vaccination rates, including the hepatitis B birth dose, understanding the importance and necessity of the hepatitis B vaccine is more important than ever.

About Hepatitis B:

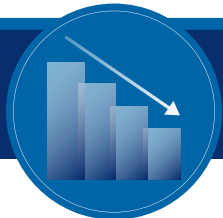
Anyone can be infected with hepatitis B. An exposure to even a microscopic amount of infected blood can result in a lifelong infection.

- Hepatitis B is a blood-borne viral infection of the liver that can lead to very serious liver complications and liver disease, such as cirrhosis and liver cancer.
- Hepatitis B is the world's leading cause of liver cancer.
- Hepatitis B is most commonly spread from mother-to-child due to blood exchange at birth. It is not just a sexually transmitted disease.
- Hepatitis B is up to 100 times more infectious than HIV.
- Hepatitis B rarely has any symptoms, which means that the virus can be spread easily and unknowingly.
- Up to 2.4 million Americans are living with hepatitis B – and more than 60% are unaware of their infection.
- The hepatitis B virus can survive on surfaces for up to seven days.
- Due to the highly infectious nature of the virus, and how easily it can be transmitted, babies can be exposed to the virus during accidental household exposure. Precautions do not guarantee that a child will never be exposed to the virus. Vaccination is the only way to truly prevent a child from getting hepatitis B!

Hepatitis B Birth Dose:

The hepatitis B vaccine has prevented more than 90,000 childhood deaths in the U.S. since 1994 – the 4th highest number of deaths prevented out of all 14 of the childhood immunizations.

- The hepatitis B vaccine has been administered over 1 billion times since its creation, giving us one of the best safety profiles for any vaccine in history.
- Vaccination within the first 12-24 hours of life is essential because there is a direct relation between the age infected, and the chances of developing a chronic infection. Approximately 90% of babies who are exposed to hepatitis B will develop chronic hepatitis B, placing them at an increased risk for liver cancer in their lifetime.
- Before the universal hepatitis B infant vaccination recommendation in 1991, approximately 18,000 children in the U.S. were infected each year before they reached the age of 10. Half of these infections were from mother-to-child during birth while the other half were infected during early childhood from other people living with hepatitis B.
- Over three dozen countries provide and recommend the hepatitis B birth dose.
- Through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, more than six million hepatitis B infections and nearly 1 million hospitalizations related to hepatitis B have been prevented since 1994.



With universal birth dose and universal childhood immunization, the U.S. saw a 99% decrease in child and teen hepatitis B infections.

References & Resources

For more information about hepatitis B and the importance of vaccines, please use the following resources:

1. AAP Recommends that Infants Receive First Hepatitis B Dose within 24 Hours of Birth. Aug. 8 2017. American Academy of Pediatrics. Accessed Dec. 2024.
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/AAP-Recommends-that-Infants-Receive-First-Hepatitis-B-Dose-within-24-Hours-of-Birth.aspx>.
2. Bixler, D., Roberts, H., Panagiotakopoulos, L., Nelson, N. P., Spradling, P. R., & Teshale, E. H. (2023). Progress and Unfinished Business: Hepatitis B in the United States, 1980-2019. Public health reports (Washington, D.C. : 1974), 333549231175548. Advance online publication.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00333549231175548>.
3. Data Page: Which countries include hepatitis B birth dose vaccines in their national vaccination programs?", part of the following publication: Fiona Spooner, Saloni Dattani, Samantha Vanderslott, and Max Roser (2022) - "Vaccination". Data adapted from World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://archive.ourworldindata.org/20250909-093708/grapher/hepatitis-b-birth-dose-vaccine-immunization-schedule.html>.
4. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center. Hepatitis B Q&A – What you should know. <https://www.chop.edu/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-details/hepatitis-b-vaccine>.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Hepatitis B Virus: A Comprehensive Strategy for Eliminating Transmission in the United States Through Universal Childhood Vaccination: Recommendations of the Immunization Practices Advisory Committee (ACIP). Nov. 2 1991. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed Dec 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00033405.htm>
6. Zhou F, Jatlaoui TC, Leidner AJ, et al. Health and Economic Benefits of Routine Childhood Immunizations in the Era of the Vaccines for Children Program — United States, 1994–2023. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2024;73:682–685. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7331a2>.