

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. The following facts can be used to help educate decision-makers, legislators, and, most importantly, parents about why the hepatitis B vaccine is vital to the health of babies and infants.

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.
- When exposed to hepatitis B as a baby or child, most people will develop a chronic infection.
- 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 during the birthing process. 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.
- The vaccine is safe for babies. The hepatitis B vaccine has been administered over 1 billion times since its creation in 1986.
- 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, and 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 90,100 childhood deaths in the U.S. since 1994 – the 4th highest number of deaths prevented out of all 14 of the childhood immunizations.

- 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.
- 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.
- With routine birth dose, the U.S. saw a 95% decrease in infant infections.
- An estimated 1,000 infants are infected each year in the U.S. This can be prevented.
- The birth dose is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

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

www.hepb.org; <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/pdfs/mm7331a2-H.pdf?ref=youcanknowthings.com>; <https://www.chop.edu/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-details/hepatitis-b-vaccine>; <https://www.chop.edu/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-details/hepatitis-b-vaccine>; Hepatitis B Q&A – What you should know. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center; AAP Recommends that Infants Receive First Hepatitis B Dose within 24 Hours of Birth. Aug. 8 2017. American Academy of Pediatrics. Accessed Dec. 2024.; 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.; Cost-effectiveness of treating all hepatitis B-positive individuals in the United States. Razavi-Shearer D. et al. 2023. J.Viral. Hepat. Accessed Dec. 2024.

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