



Hepatitis B Protection for Newborns: What Parents Should Know

Why is my newborn at risk for Hepatitis B?

- Hepatitis B can be passed to a baby during birth.¹
- It can also be passed later through tiny, unnoticeable exposures to blood or body fluids — even from people who don't know they carry the virus.^{1,2}
- Many adults with Hepatitis B have no symptoms and don't realize they're infected.²

Why are newborns more vulnerable to Hepatitis B?

- Babies who get Hepatitis B in their first months of life have about a **90% chance** of developing lifelong chronic infection.³
- Chronic Hepatitis B greatly increases the risk of cirrhosis, liver failure, and liver cancer later in life.³

If I tested negative during pregnancy, is my baby safe?

- Not all infections are detected during pregnancy.^{1,4}
- Test results can be missing, delayed, or inaccurate.¹
- Some people acquire Hepatitis B later in pregnancy.¹
- Babies may also be exposed after birth by household members or caregivers.¹
- The birth-dose vaccine provides early, reliable protection no matter what.^{1,4}

How does the birth-dose vaccine protect my baby?

- When given within 24 hours of birth, it prevents up to **90% of infections** passed from parent to baby.⁴
- After completing the full vaccine series, about **98% of healthy infants develop long-term immunity**.⁵

Can my child wait until they are older to get the vaccine?

- Delaying the first dose leaves infants unprotected during the time when Hepatitis B infection is most dangerous.^{3,6}
- There is no evidence that waiting improves safety.⁶
- What does change with delay is risk — infection in infancy is far more likely to become lifelong.³

Is the Hepatitis B vaccine safe for newborns?

- The vaccine has been used for more than **30 years** in millions of newborns worldwide.⁶
- Serious side effects are extremely rare.⁶
- Major medical and public-health organizations continue to recommend the birth dose because the evidence is strong and consistent.⁶

In Summary

- The newborn Hepatitis B vaccine has protected children for decades.
- It is safe, effective, and strongly recommended to prevent a serious lifelong illness.
- **Talk with your pediatrician or birthing team about including the birth dose in your baby's care plan.**

References:

Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) "[Universal Hepatitis B Vaccination at Birth](#)," Dec 2, 2025

1. Transmission at birth; household exposure; screening gaps: pp. 1–2, 5
2. Many adults are asymptomatic and unaware of infection: pp. 4–5
3. Infant risk of chronic infection and long-term outcomes: p. 5
4. Effectiveness of the birth dose within 24 hours: p. 5
5. Long-term immunity following infant vaccination: p. 10
6. Vaccine safety, long-term use, and no benefit to delay: pp. 8–9

