



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Infants and Hepatitis B

Information for parents of babies at risk of Hepatitis B

## Child Health

ⓘ For more information, please contact:

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## **What is Hepatitis B?**

Hepatitis B is a virus that can be passed on from an infected mother to her child at birth or sometimes after birth.

## **How can my baby catch Hepatitis B?**

Blood tests in pregnancy identify mothers who may pass on the virus to their babies. The hepatitis B virus cannot pass across the placenta but if a mother is hepatitis B positive during pregnancy, it is possible for her baby to become infected if the baby comes into contact with her blood. This is most likely to happen during birth.

Babies at risk of being infected by the virus can be given a series of vaccinations, which will prevent the infection. This vaccination should be given shortly after birth, before the baby leaves hospital, with extra doses as the baby grows up to stop the baby being affected by the virus.

## **What is the chance of my baby becoming infected?**

Babies at risk of being infected by the virus can be given a series of vaccinations, which will prevent the infection.

Other factors depend on the stage of the infection in the mother (recent infection increases the risk) and the strength of the mother's immune system response, against the virus (a strong response helps to protect the baby).

## **Does vaccination work?**

Yes. The vaccination schedule used will prevent infection for the baby in more than 95% (95 out of 100) of cases.

# **Does my baby have to have the vaccination and antibody injection?**

These treatments are important for your baby's health and are strongly recommended. Obviously we would not give treatments to your baby without your consent. You will be able to discuss the treatment with the doctors and midwives at clinic visits and when your baby is born.

- Without vaccination up to 80% (80 out of 100) of babies will develop the infection.
- 20% to 25% (20 to 25 out of 100) of children with the infection go on to develop chronic liver disease when they are adults.

# **What injections are needed to protect my baby?**

All babies at risk of hepatitis B receive six doses of vaccine in total.

**First vaccination:** given on the baby's first day of life whilst they are still in hospital. If there is a high risk of infection, your baby will be given a single injection of antibodies along with this first vaccination.

**Second vaccination:** given when baby is four weeks old. This will be done in the GP's surgery.

**Third vaccination:** given at two months of age. This will be given by your GP or health visitor along with the first set of the ordinary baby vaccinations.

**Fourth vaccination:** due at three months of age. This will be given by your GP or health visitor along with the scheduled second set of the ordinary baby vaccinations.

**Fifth vaccination:** due at four months of age. This will be given by your GP or health visitor along with the third set of the ordinary baby vaccinations.

**Final sixth vaccination:** Due at 12 months. This can be given also at the GP's surgery. The baby will also be booked in hospital for a blood test to check that your baby has been successfully protected. The appointment for this should be made before you leave hospital after the birth.

## **Is the vaccination and antibody injection safe - are there side effects?**

Both the antibody injection and the vaccine are very safe. If your baby is at risk of hepatitis then it is much safer to have the vaccination than to risk him or her getting the infection!

The vaccine has been used for more than 15 years and the only side effects seen are sometimes soreness and redness at the injection site. The vaccine does not contain any infectious material and cannot cause the disease it protects against.

The antibody injection has very occasionally caused allergic reactions. This type of reaction is very, very rare in infants.

This product has been used for more than 20 years in the UK. There are no recorded instances of any infection being transmitted by the antibody injection.

## **Can I breast feed?**

Yes. As long as your baby has all of his/her injections at the correct times then breast-feeding is safe. In fact, it is the best way of feeding your baby.

## **What if I have a caesarean section?**

Babies born by caesarean section are still exposed to their mother's blood and so are still at risk. They will be treated in the same way as they would be in a vaginal delivery.

## **What about home deliveries?**

Mothers with hepatitis B can still deliver at home (if there are no other problems) as long as the GP and midwife can guarantee that the baby will receive all the correct treatment without delay. If this cannot be guaranteed, then you will be advised to deliver in hospital.

## **What about the rest of my baby's vaccinations?**

Your baby still needs the protection provided by the other vaccinations routinely given to infants. Hepatitis B vaccine can be given along with any of the usual vaccines used.

## **What should I do if I have any questions?**

If you have any questions regarding this vaccination for your baby please contact your GP, health visitor or midwife.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

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telephone 01723 385269 or email [sky.ingle@nhs.net](mailto:sky.ingle@nhs.net),  
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## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# **Leaflets in alternative languages or formats**

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

Owner	Dr Ramos-Martin, Consultant Paediatrician
Date first issued	October 2016
Review Date	April 2026
Version	3 (issued May 2024)
Approved by	Paediatric Team and Clinical Governance
Document Reference	PIL1054 v3

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