

Immunization Facts for Families

Hepatitis B

Updated September 2, 2026

The hepatitis B vaccine is routinely recommended for all newborns and infants. The vaccine provides protection from serious liver disease.

The hepatitis B vaccine protects your child from:

- Acute infection, which causes fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, jaundice, and pain in muscles, joints, and stomach
- Chronic infection, which can lead to liver damage, liver cancer, and death

Who should receive the hepatitis B vaccine and when?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends the hepatitis B vaccine for:

- All newborns within the first 24 hours of life, regardless of the mother's hepatitis B status.
- A second dose should be given to all infants at 1–2 months of age and a third dose at 6–18 months of age.
- Depending on the type of vaccine given, some infants may receive 4 doses of hepatitis B vaccine.

Children who did not receive hepatitis B vaccination at these ages can catch up with either a 3-dose or 2-dose series depending on their age. Talk to your child's pediatrician about the appropriate catch up schedule.

One of the first things a baby's immune system may encounter is hepatitis B, which mothers can unknowingly pass to their babies during delivery. That's why the hepatitis B vaccine is the first one most babies receive. Young children can contract the virus other ways, too, such as from an infected family member or at day care. Many people with hepatitis B don't know they have it until they face serious liver problems later in life.



The vaccine prompts the immune system to resist the infection — and prevents serious complications like chronic liver disease and cancer.

How does hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B is highly contagious and spreads through body fluids. People can become infected with the virus through:

- Birth (a baby can be infected at or after birth)
- Sharing common household items such as toothbrushes with an infected person
- Contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person
- Sex with an infected partner
- Sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment.
- Exposure to blood from needlesticks or sharp instruments

The hepatitis B virus can live on surfaces for up to one week. Maintaining high rates of hepatitis B vaccine will keep children and child care settings safe from this virus. Birth doses of the hepatitis B vaccine have cut infections in U.S. children and teens by 99%.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Most children have no side effects after hepatitis B vaccination. If they do experience side effects, they often are mild and temporary and may include pain where the shot was given, fever, headache, or feeling tired. These reactions are normal signs that the body is building protection.



Learn more

If you have questions about vaccines and keeping your child healthy, talk with your pediatrician. Visit www.healthychildren.org/HepB for more information on hepatitis B vaccines from the AAP.

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