

Preventing Hepatitis B and Serious Chronic Illness with Vaccination

Hepatitis B is a serious liver infection that is transmitted through blood and body fluids.¹ Infants are at risk of exposure and are particularly vulnerable to developing both acute and serious, chronic health issues if they are infected at birth or in early childhood.²

It is important to know that hepatitis B is not only a sexually transmitted infection. Hepatitis B can be contracted through casual household contact every day.



BABIES ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO HEPATITIS B, AND INFECTION AT BIRTH CAN LAST A LIFETIME, MAKING EARLY VACCINATION CRITICAL.

Infants can be exposed to hepatitis B during childbirth and through everyday contact.

The virus can live outside of the body for up to a week and an infected family member or caregiver can pass hepatitis B to a child in many ways, including³:

- During pregnancy or birth (from an infected mother to her baby)
- Through a bite from an infected person
- By touching open cuts or sores of an infected person
- By sharing, even incidental, personal items like toothbrushes, razors or towels with an infected person



Newborns infected with hepatitis B virus have a **90% chance** of developing **chronic infection**, which can lead to **cirrhosis and liver cancer**.⁴



In infants and children, vaccination is **95-99% effective in preventing hepatitis B** and its serious long-term complications.⁵



THE BENEFITS OF THE HEPATITIS B VACCINE FAR OUTWEIGH POTENTIAL RISKS

The hepatitis B vaccine has been extensively studied over four decades. Adverse reactions are mild and usually include arm soreness near the injection site or a low-grade fever. More severe adverse reactions are rare, occurring in fewer than 1 in 600,000 doses.⁶

- Over a 30-year span, the hepatitis B vaccination in children has prevented over 6 million cases of illness and over 90,000 deaths and 900,000 hospitalizations.⁷
- The inclusion of the hepatitis B vaccine on the childhood schedule has resulted in reduced risk from all-cause (22%) and cancer-related mortality (24%) in vaccinated individuals compared to those who were unvaccinated.⁸



ACROSS JUST ONE BIRTH COHORT (CHILDREN BORN IN 2009), THE HEPATITIS B VACCINE HAS LED TO SAVINGS OF \$240 MILLION IN DIRECT COSTS, INCLUDING MEDICAL EXPENSES FOR TREATMENT AND COMPLICATIONS PLUS NONMEDICAL COSTS LIKE TRANSPORTATION AND DISABILITY-RELATED SUPPORT.

- It has saved \$1.77 billion in broader societal costs, such as lost productivity from illness or death and missed workdays for caregivers.⁹
- Hepatitis B vaccination delivered significant government savings: It prevented an estimated \$425.8 million in lost tax income (federal income and payroll taxes and the average amount paid in state income and sales taxes), \$149.5 million in disability transfer payments, and \$43 million in health care costs related to the disease.

One of the most effective ways to protect infants from serious illness is through the hepatitis B vaccine given at birth.

Preventing infection avoids the high costs of lifelong medical care for chronic hepatitis and liver disease.

The hepatitis B vaccine has been shown to be safe and effective over decades of use. Vaccinating at birth is highly effective in preventing life-long liver disease and provides critical protection when infants are most vulnerable.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis-b/about/index.html>

² <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2025/why-hepatitis-b-vaccination-begins-at-birth/>

³ <https://vaccinateyourfamily.org/hepatitis-b/>

⁴ <https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/fact-checked/fact-checked-hepatitis-b-vaccine-given-to-newborns-reduces-risk-of-chronic-infection/?srsltid=AfmBOoohU7Yp-faovleAte7X5nUM60isZ5AskJaSJrKRTFPAD5Pq7hoA>

⁵ <https://www.hepb.org/assets/Uploads/birth-dose-talking-points-1.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.chop.edu/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-details/hepatitis-b-vaccine#:~:text=The%20hepatitis%20B%20vaccine%20is%20given%20to%20prevent%20the%20severe,protected%20against%20hepatitis%20B%20virus.>

⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7331a2.htm>

⁸ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34855999/>

⁹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24590750/>