

are now protected. Side effects may be a sore arm and redness where you were injected.

- If you are pregnant or wish to become pregnant it is best to discuss this with your doctor before getting vaccinated.
- Do not let children touch blood or body fluids, or any tissues that have been soiled with these, of someone who has hepatitis B infection.
- If children are exposed to the blood of someone with hepatitis B infection and have not been protected against the infection by vaccination, they can be protected from hepatitis B if they get treatment quickly. You should bring the child to your doctor or Emergency Department and say they have been in contact with hepatitis B. They will get an injection of hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) and start the hepatitis B vaccine course.
- Do not share toothbrushes, razors, needles, nail files, nail clippers, nail scissors, washcloths or towels with someone who has hepatitis B infection.

### You cannot spread hepatitis B by

- Sneezing or coughing
- Kissing or hugging
- Breastfeeding
- Food or water
- Sharing dishes or glasses
- Casual contact (such as at work)

You should not be excluded from childcare, school, work, or other activities because you have hepatitis B.

## Remember:

Make sure your baby completes the hepatitis B vaccine course at the right time so that your baby may be protected.



## How can I learn more?

Useful information on hepatitis B can be found from the following sources:

- Your family doctor
- Local public health department of the HSE

You can get other leaflets about hepatitis B on the following websites:

- [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)
- [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv)
- [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
- [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)



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# Hepatitis B

## You and Your Baby



If you have hepatitis B and you are pregnant, planning a pregnancy, if you've just had a baby or have children already, this leaflet will give you information on how to protect your baby and children.

Immunisation is highly effective in preventing hepatitis B infection in babies and children.

### What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver and can make you seriously ill. It is spread by contact with the blood or body fluids of an infected person. Some people with hepatitis B never get rid of the virus and may stay infected for life. This is chronic hepatitis B infection and people who have it may infect others. Some people with chronic hepatitis B infection go on to develop severe liver disease. Some people with chronic hepatitis B infection have no symptoms and they may spread the virus to others without knowing.

### What if I am pregnant?

Pregnant women should be tested for hepatitis B. If you test positive, your obstetrician or family doctor may refer you to a specialist.

### What is the risk to my baby?

You can pass hepatitis B to your baby at birth or soon after birth unless the baby is immunised.

Children who are infected with hepatitis B early in life have a greater risk of chronic infection. Up to 90% of babies infected at birth will develop chronic infection unless they are immunized. This often causes health problems later on in life.

### How can I protect my baby?

The best way to protect your newborn baby from hepatitis B is by immunisation. Immunisation consists of hepatitis B vaccine along with hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG).

- The first dose of hepatitis B vaccine and a dose of hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) should be given to your baby shortly after birth.
- Make sure that your baby gets the next doses of vaccine - usually at two, four and six months of age, as part of the regular childhood vaccination schedule.
- Your family doctor or paediatrician will take a blood test two months after the completion of the vaccine course to check if your baby is infected or not. If your baby has not been infected, the blood test checks that your baby is protected by the vaccine.
- More than 95% of babies who receive the full hepatitis B vaccine schedule and the hepatitis B immunoglobulin are protected from hepatitis B.

**Make sure your baby completes the hepatitis B vaccine course at the right time so that your baby may be protected.**

### Is hepatitis B vaccine safe?

- The hepatitis B vaccine is safe and effective.
- Side effects may include soreness and redness where the injection was given.

- Hepatitis B vaccine can be given at the same time as other childhood vaccines.
- Hepatitis B vaccine is not a blood product.
- You cannot get hepatitis B from the vaccine.

### What is hepatitis B immunoglobulin?

- Hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) can give early protection to people who are at high risk of infection, such as newborn babies of infected mothers.
- It is a blood product. Blood donors are carefully screened. The blood is tested and treated to reduce the risk of infection.
- It does not interfere with other vaccines given in infancy.

**Caesarean section does not protect your baby against hepatitis B.**

**Breastfeeding is safe for your baby. Hepatitis B is not spread by breast milk.**

### How can I protect my other children?

Children living in the same home as people with chronic hepatitis B infection can become infected. Hepatitis B can spread from an infected child or adult to your other children if they have not been vaccinated. Vaccinate your other children to protect them from infection. If you or anyone in your home has hepatitis B, bring your children to your family doctor for vaccination.

- Hepatitis B vaccine is a safe, effective vaccine and your best protection. The vaccine is given in a course of three injections. After three injections, a blood test may sometimes be taken to check if you