

PREGNANT?

Get tested for hepatitis B

All women should be tested for hepatitis B every time they are pregnant.

Even if you don't have symptoms, you might have hepatitis B. If you do, you can pass it on to your baby at birth. The baby can carry this serious disease for a lifetime.

The good news, though, is that your baby can easily be protected with immunizations, starting at birth.



What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a liver disease, caused by a virus in the blood. Most people who have it show no symptoms at all but are still carriers of the disease. They can pass it on to others, and they may later develop serious liver diseases such as cirrhosis (scarring) and liver cancer.

How is hepatitis B spread?

If you have hepatitis B, your baby can catch it during birth, when he or she has contact with your blood. Hepatitis B also can be spread when a person has sex with someone who has the virus, or has contact with their blood. Another way is when people use unsterilized needles for tattooing, body piercing, or illegal drugs.

How can I find out if I have hepatitis B?

Ask your doctor to order a blood test for hepatitis B. You can be tested at any time during your pregnancy. If the test is "positive," the virus is in your blood, even if you feel fine.

If the test is "negative," you don't have hepatitis B. But, to protect yourself in the future, you can be immunized.

How can I protect my baby, if the test shows I have hepatitis B?

- Tell the hospital that you have hepatitis B before you give birth.
- Make sure your baby begins a series of shots within 12 hours of birth.
- Tell the doctor who will care for your baby.
- See that your baby gets follow-up hepatitis B shots.
- Make sure your baby has a blood test at age 9-15 months, to see if he or she is protected by the vaccine, or needs more shots.

All children will get three hepatitis B shots as part of their regular baby shots. If you have hepatitis B, though, your baby must start the series right at birth and get the other hepatitis B shots on time.

Can I breastfeed if I have hepatitis B?

Yes, you can breastfeed—but only if your baby has started getting hepatitis B shots. Tell your clinic if you develop cracked nipples or open sores on your breast.



Pregnant? Get Tested for Hepatitis B
Immunization Program
800-657-3970, 651-201-5503
www.health.state.mn.us/immunize
IC# 141-0624 (7/08)

If I have hepatitis B, how can I keep from spreading it to others?

Hepatitis B is very contagious. People who have it—even if they don't feel sick—must be careful not to pass it on to others.

- You should clean up your blood and cover any wounds with a bandage. Re-clean the area with a bleach solution. Wash your hands well after you have touched your blood.
- Don't share razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers, or anything else that might come in contact with blood, saliva, or other body fluids.
- Tell your sex partner that you have hepatitis B and that he should be tested. Use condoms until you know your partner is protected.
- Have others you live with (children and adults) tested to see whether they need hepatitis B shots.

In short . . .

Protect your baby and others in your family from hepatitis B.

- Have a blood test yourself.
- If you are infected, tell your hospital and baby's doctor.
- See that your baby gets his or her shots, on time.
- See that other family members are protected by the hepatitis B vaccine.
- Take steps to keep the disease from spreading.

Talk with your doctor if you have other questions about hepatitis B.

If you have questions about the shots, call the Perinatal Hepatitis B program, 800-657-3970 or 651-201-5503.

Visit our web site at:
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/hepb/index.html>