



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Don't Leave the Hospital Without It

Newborn Hepatitis B Vaccination Coverage Among Children Born January 2003–June 2005 —United States

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease that can result in lifelong illness or premature death. In 2005, CDC recommended that all newborns get the hepatitis B vaccine before they're released from the hospital. However, a recent CDC survey found that just over half of newborns are being vaccinated before discharge.

Dr. Norma Allred is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of newborns being vaccinated with the hepatitis B vaccine. Welcome, Norma.

[Dr. Allred] Thank you so much for having me here, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] How would a baby become infected with hepatitis B?

[Dr. Allred] There are actually two ways a baby can become infected. Most often, it's from an infected mother during the birth process. Another way might be if a household contact is infected with the virus, they could transfer that infection to the baby through any cuts or breaks in the skin the baby might have.

[Dr. Gaynes] What problems can result from hepatitis B?

[Dr. Allred] Well, if the baby doesn't receive the vaccine shortly after birth and the mother transmits the infection to the baby, this can result in a chronic or a lifelong infection. The baby can have scarring of the liver, might develop liver cancer one day, or can die prematurely.

[Dr. Gaynes] What symptoms would an infant have to indicate they might be infected with hepatitis B?

[Dr. Allred] Well, infants are really different from adults. You might know adults that might have yellow skin or yellow eyes when they're infected with hepatitis. Unfortunately, babies generally don't show any signs and symptoms of being infected at all.

[Dr. Gaynes] Norma, why do newborns need to get the hepatitis B vaccine before they're discharged from the hospital?

[Dr. Allred] If newborns are going to be infected, most often, it comes from the mother during the birth process. If the baby gets the vaccine shortly after birth, this can prevent infection in over ninety percent of babies.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there any potential side effects from the hepatitis B vaccine?

[Dr. Allred] Well, we're very lucky. This is a very safe and effective vaccine. The most common side effects are really minor. It might be soreness at the site where the injection's given or it might be a low-grade temperature.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about the hepatitis B vaccine?

[Dr. Allred] Well, of course, one of the best sources for information about the hepatitis B vaccine is your baby's doctor, but listeners should also go to the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis to get more information.

[Dr. Gaynes] Norma, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. Allred] Well, thank you so much for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] That's it for this week's show. Be sure and join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.