

Hepatitis B infection

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The blood test you had in pregnancy has shown you have an infection called Hepatitis B.

Hepatitis B is caused by a virus. It can be transmitted by having contact with Hepatitis B infected blood or through having unprotected sex with an infected person. It can also be transmitted to a baby at birth if the mother has Hepatitis B.

It is a very common infection in some parts of the world, particularly Asia and Africa. Many infected people will not even realise they have contracted Hepatitis B, and will only find out when have a blood test for the virus (such as during antenatal screening).

Whilst most people who become infected make a full recovery and will clear the virus from their body, your tests show that you have had the virus and have not cleared it. Some virus is still present in your body, and this is known as 'Chronic Hepatitis B' or being a 'Hepatitis B carrier'

This remaining virus can cause inflammation of the liver, which over a period of time can cause scarring of the liver and lead to liver damage in some people. Some 'carriers' will remain healthy for life, whilst others may develop conditions such as cirrhosis (normally this takes many years) and may become unwell.

You will therefore be referred to a specialist liver doctor (Hepatologist) who will assess your liver function and will then see you regularly once or twice a year to check that your liver continues to work well. If at any time the doctor thinks your liver is struggling he may start you on medication to try to reduce the amount of virus in your body (not everyone will need to have this).

As you can pass the virus on to others through your blood or through unprotected sex it is important you are careful not to share items which may have blood on them, even in very small amounts (such as toothbrushes or razors) and to use condoms.

To prevent further stress on your liver it is best to avoid alcohol, have a healthy diet and lifestyle, and not to smoke.

If you have a partner the Health Advisers at The Claude Nicol Clinic can arrange for them to be tested for Hepatitis B and to be vaccinated against it which will protect them from infection. Once they have finished the course of 3 vaccines plus had a blood test to check the vaccines have worked they will be protected, and you may decide to stop using condoms.

If you have any older children they should also be tested and vaccinated, and anyone else who lives in your home should also be vaccinated (the Health Advisers can help to arrange this too).

As there is a risk of passing the infection onto your baby, usually during delivery, your baby needs to be vaccinated in order to reduce this risk. The vaccine is very safe and does not normally cause any side effects.

You can usually have a normal delivery and can still breastfeed.

Your baby will be given the 1st vaccination within 12 hours of birth (whilst still in the hospital). Please feel free to remind the staff about this if they are busy!

You will need to make the appointments for your baby to have the next 3 vaccines at your GP surgery. These vaccines need to be given to your baby at 1 month, 2 months and 1 year of age. It is important to keep accurately to this schedule. You will be sent an

appointment when your baby is about 14 months old to take him / her for a blood test to check the vaccine has worked and that he / she is free from infection. A 'booster' vaccine is recommended at 5 years of age.

Remember that it is possible that your Hepatitis B may never cause you any health problems, but it is very important to keep the condition monitored and also to protect your baby and other family members with vaccination.

Useful contacts and further information

Trisha Keith Women's Health Adviser 07919 627603
Claude Nicol Clinic 01273 664721
Hepatology Nurse Specialists 01273 696955 Ext. 4541
British Liver Trust 0800 652 7330
www.britishlivertrust.org.uk

Written by Trisha Keith, Women's Health Adviser

If you do not understand this leaflet, we can arrange for an interpreter.

إذا كنت لا تستطيع فهم محتويات هذه النشرة فيمكننا عمل الترتيبات لتوفير مترجم شفوي لك.

এই প্রচারপুস্তিকাটি যদি আপনি বুঝতে না পারেন, তবে আপনার জন্য আমরা একজন অনুবাদকের ব্যবস্থা করে দিতে পারি।

如果你不明白本單張的內容，我們可安排口譯員服務。

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اگر مندرجات این جزوه را نمیفهمید، ما می‌توانیم مترجم در اختیارتان بگذاریم.

Jeśli masz trudności w zrozumieniu tej ulotki, możemy zorganizować tłumacza.

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Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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