

New Reportable Condition: Hepatitis B Positivity during Pregnancy

Effective December 2000, HBsAg-positive status during pregnancy is a required reportable condition in Washington State. Health care providers are legally required to report HBsAg-positive pregnant women to local health departments according to Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 246-101-101 within 3 working days.

Nationally, an estimated 20,000 births occur annually to hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)-positive mothers, with an estimated 350 births expected in Washington State. Only 68% of the expected births to HBsAg-positive mothers were identified in Washington State in 1999. Infants born to these mothers are at very high risk of becoming chronically infected, with 25% dying of liver disease later in life.

It is crucial that mothers are screened for HBsAg early in each pregnancy, and infants born to infected mothers are identified in order to assure that they receive appropriate post-exposure prophylaxis.

Immunoprophylaxis for infants born to infected mothers include hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) and 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine, and post-vaccine testing 3-9 months later. Immunization with HBIG and hepatitis B vaccine is 95% effective in preventing hepatitis B infection in these exposed infants.

Health care providers should screen every pregnant woman early in each pregnancy according to CDC and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommendations. HBsAg testing should be repeated late in pregnancy if the woman is HBsAg negative, but at high risk of hepatitis B infection (e.g. injection drug user, infected with other sexually transmitted disease, having multiple sexual partners). *During each pregnancy that a woman is HBsAg positive, the local health department should be notified. Health care providers should also notify the delivery hospital of every HBsAg-positive mother prior to her due date so the newborn will receive appropriate post-exposure prophylaxis.*

Local health departments assure that perinatally exposed infants receive appropriate post-exposure prophylaxis, and that household members and sexual contacts are screened and vaccinated if susceptible.

Further information on hepatitis B prevention:

- Contact your local health department
- Washington State Department of Health Immunization Program
Phone: (360) 236-3595 or www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize
- For more information on notifiable conditions, go to:
www.doh.wa.gov/OS/Policy/246-101prp3.pdf
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis>
- Immunization Action Coalition: <http://www.immunize.org>