

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Draft Recommendation Statement on Screening for Hepatitis B Virus Infection in Pregnant Women

All pregnant women should be screened for hepatitis B at their first prenatal visit

WASHINGTON, D.C. – January 08, 2019 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review on screening for hepatitis B virus infection in pregnant women. Based on the evidence, the Task Force recommends screening for hepatitis B infection in pregnant women at their first prenatal visit to prevent infection in newborns. **This is an A recommendation.**

Grade in this recommendation:

A: Recommended.

[Learn more here](#)

Hepatitis B is a viral infection of the liver that can cause a number of chronic conditions, such as liver disease or liver cancer. About 1.2 million people in the United States are infected with hepatitis B. When babies become infected with hepatitis B from their mothers, they have a 90 percent chance of developing lifelong chronic infections, such as liver disease and liver cancer. To prevent pregnant women with hepatitis B from transmitting it to their baby, there is an effective vaccine and preventive medication that can be given to the infant within 12 hours of birth.

“Screening for hepatitis B really matters,” said Task Force member Melissa A Simon, M.D., M.P.H. “Since 1998, rates of maternal hepatitis B virus have increased annually by 5.5 percent. With early screening, we can treat pregnant individuals and substantially reduce transmission of the virus to their babies.”

Screening for hepatitis B in pregnancy has been a standard of care for more than 30 years, with an A recommendation from the Task Force since 1996, the first time the topic was reviewed.

“In children, the primary source of hepatitis B infection is transmission at birth from an infected mother,” added Task Force member Alex Kemper, M.D., M.P.H., M.S. “But we know that screening for hepatitis B in pregnant women can keep babies from getting the virus and prevent the onset of potentially lifelong serious health problems.”

The Task Force’s draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review have been posted for public comment on the Task Force Web site at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. Comments can be submitted from January 8, 2019 to February 4, 2019 at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/tfcomment.htm.

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine that works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

Dr. Simon is the George H. Gardner professor of clinical gynecology, vice chair of clinical research in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and professor of preventive medicine and medical social sciences at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

Dr. Kemper is a board-certified pediatrician and chief of the Division of Ambulatory Pediatrics at Nationwide Children's Hospital. He is also the deputy editor of *Pediatrics*.

Contact: USPSTF Media Coordinator at Newsroom@USPSTF.net / (202) 572-2044