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KEY POINTS FOR MEDIA:

- IDPH maintains existing recommendation for universal dose of hepatitis B vaccine at birth
- IDPH reaffirms recommendations on seasonal and other routine immunizations
- Guidance reflects recommendations of the Illinois Immunization Advisory Committee (IL-IAC)

IDPH Reaffirms Science-Based Recommendation for All Newborns to Receive Hepatitis B Vaccine at Birth

Guidance upholds longstanding best practice to prevent potentially deadly infections in newborns

SPRINGFIELD – Today, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) reaffirmed the recommendation for a universal hepatitis B vaccination at birth to prevent hepatitis B, a serious viral infection that can lead to acute or chronic liver disease.

The guidance aligns with decades of scientific consensus and endorses recommendations from the Illinois Immunization Advisory Committee (IL-IAC). These actions come in response to recent moves by the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) which changed longstanding federal guidance that called for universal birth vaccination against hepatitis B.

“Parents deserve clear, trustworthy, and science-based information when making decisions about their child’s health,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “I am grateful to the IL-IAC for their thorough review of the latest data, which reaffirms that the hepatitis B vaccine at birth is safe, effective, and critical in preventing chronic liver disease and liver cancer later in life. Despite recent federal changes, our recommendation for universal birth vaccination ensures every newborn in Illinois receives the strongest protection against this potentially deadly infection.”

“The IAC showed continued commitment to scientific integrity by advising IDPH to reaffirm and maintain the universal Hepatitis B birth dose recommendation and the routine Hepatitis B vaccine series without changes,” said Dr. Marielle Fricchione, Chair of the IL-IAC. “Overwhelmingly, the IAC considered the universal Hepatitis B vaccination strategy a public health success story for Illinois rather than the current ACIP framing as an urgent public health problem. The committee determined that any changes to the current recommendation would do more harm than good; specifically it would not be acceptable to most stakeholders, it is not feasible, it would not be an efficient use of resources, and it would have a negative impact on health equity.”

The universal hepatitis B birth vaccination recommendation is one component of a larger body of guidance issued by Director Vohra following the meeting of the IL-IAC earlier this week. As part of the authority granted to him [when Governor JB Pritzker signed House Bill 767 into law earlier this month](#), Director Vohra

issued comprehensive guidance on immunization best practices related to hepatitis B. The guidance reaffirms these recommendations:

- Universal hepatitis B vaccination at birth to prevent hepatitis B infections in children.
- Infants should receive all doses of the [hepatitis B vaccine series on time](#).
- All pregnant individuals should be screened for hepatitis B in the first trimester or their first prenatal visit. Any individuals who are at high risk for hepatitis B infection should also get screened on admission for delivery.
- IDPH reaffirms its guidance for flu, COVID-19, and RSV immunizations as issued [in its guidance on September 23, 2025](#).
- For all other routine vaccinations, IDPH reaffirms its recommendation to follow the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule and the Adult Immunization Schedule as of August 7, 2025. Those schedules can be found [on the Immunizations page at the IDPH website](#).

Hepatitis B can be transmitted by an infected individual to infants at birth but can also be transmitted through contact with another infected person, such as a family member or caregiver. It's estimated that as many as half of Americans with hepatitis B don't know they're infected. This is why prior attempts to limit hepatitis B based solely on the mother's infection status were not as effective as the universal birth dose. [Since the practice of universal hepatitis B vaccination at birth began in 1991, infection in U.S. children dropped by 99 percent](#)

Approximately 90 percent of infants infected at birth or during the first year of life will develop chronic hepatitis B infection, and about 25 percent of those individuals will die from chronic liver disease. IDPH remains committed to protecting the health and lives of all the children in Illinois from this preventable disease.

The hepatitis B recommendation is part of [IDPH Health Guidance](#) to medical providers statewide outlining best practices for prevention of hepatitis B infection and spread, and care for those who may have been exposed to it.

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