



Hepatitis B and C Infections

Hepatitis B Virus Infection

Is it safe for a mother infected with hepatitis B virus (HBV) to breastfeed her infant immediately after birth?

Yes. Even before the availability of hepatitis B vaccine, HBV transmission through breastfeeding was not reported. All infants born to HBV-infected mothers should receive hepatitis B immune globulin and the first dose of hepatitis B vaccine within 12 hours of birth. The second dose of vaccine should be given at aged 1–2 months, and the third dose at aged 6 months. The infant should be tested after completion of the vaccine series, at aged 9–18 months (generally at the next well-child visit), to determine if the vaccine worked and the infant is not infected with HBV through exposure to the mother's blood during the birth process. However, there is no need to delay breastfeeding until the infant is fully immunized. All mothers who breastfeed should take good care of their nipples to avoid cracking and bleeding.

For additional information on HBV infection and pregnancy, visit CDC's [Viral Hepatitis B Frequently Asked Questions \(/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/b/faqb.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/b/faqb.htm).

Hepatitis C Virus Infection

Is it safe for a mother infected with hepatitis C virus (HCV) to breastfeed her infant?

Yes. There is no documented evidence that breastfeeding spreads HCV. Therefore, having HCV-infection is not a contraindication to breastfeed. HCV is transmitted by infected blood, not by human breast milk. There are no current data to suggest that HCV is transmitted by human breast milk.

Is it safe for the HCV-positive mother to breastfeed if her nipples are cracked and bleeding?

Data are insufficient to say yes or no. However, HCV is spread by infected blood. Therefore, if the HCV-positive mother's nipples and/or surrounding areola are cracked and bleeding, she should stop nursing temporarily. Instead, she should consider expressing and discarding her breast milk until her nipples are healed. Once her breasts are no longer cracked or bleeding, the HCV-positive mother may fully resume breastfeeding.

Reference: CDC. Recommendations for prevention and control of Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection and HCV-related chronic disease. *MMWR* ([/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00055154.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00055154.htm)), October 16, 1998, 47(RR-19):1–39.

For additional information on HCV infection and pregnancy, visit CDC's [Viral Hepatitis C Frequently Asked Questions \(/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/c/faq.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/c/faq.htm).