

Statement: You can breastfeed safely with hepatitis B or hepatitis C

6 March 2023

There is a common misconception that people living with hepatitis B and/or hepatitis C cannot safely breastfeed. Recent misleading media coverage has suggested that drinking breast milk can easily pass on hepatitis B and hepatitis C. This is not the case.

Hepatitis Australia, as the national peak representing the interests of people affected by viral hepatitis and its members, issues this public statement in response.

It is safe to breastfeed if you have hepatitis B.

If you have hepatitis B, your baby should get two injections the day they are born.

If you have hepatitis B, your baby has these injections within the first 12 hours. One injection contains immunoglobulin. These are antibodies that help the body fight the virus. The second injection is baby's first regular hepatitis B vaccine. All babies get this vaccine, even if their mother doesn't have hepatitis B. They'll also get regular hepatitis B vaccines over the next 6 months.

Once your baby has received their immunoglobulin injection it is safe to breastfeed.

It is safe to breastfeed if you have hepatitis C.

Breastfeeding does not spread hepatitis C. Your baby can not get hepatitis C from your breast milk. You should stop breastfeeding if you have cracked and bleeding nipples. This is because hepatitis C spreads by infected blood. If this happens to you, talk to a midwife or GP. It's a good idea to breastfeed whether or not you have hepatitis C.

There is a cure for hepatitis C. In most cases it only requires 8-12 weeks of tablets. Hepatitis C cures should not be taken when pregnant.

You can get accurate information about hepatitis B and hepatitis C here:

- [Hepatitis B](#)
- [Hepatitis C](#)
- The National Hepatitis Infoline provides Confidential, free and localised viral hepatitis information and support services to anyone, anywhere in Australia: 1800 437 222

Thank you to the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) for providing input to this statement.

References

[Hepatitis B or C Infections](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[Australian consensus recommendations for the management of hepatitis B infection](#), GESA

[Management of Hepatitis B in pregnancy](#), RANZCOG

[Management of Hepatitis C in pregnancy](#), RANZCOG

[Bloodborne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections in Antenatal Care](#), ASHM