

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommends Screening for Hepatitis B Infection in All Pregnant Women

WASHINGTON, D.C. – July 23, 2019 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation statement on screening for hepatitis B virus infection in pregnant women. Based on the evidence, the Task Force recommends all pregnant women be screened for hepatitis B infection at their first prenatal visit to prevent infection in newborns. **This is an A recommendation.**

Hepatitis B is a viral infection of the liver that can cause chronic conditions such as liver disease or liver cancer. When babies become infected with hepatitis B from their mothers, they have a 90 percent chance of developing these lifelong chronic infections.

Grade in this recommendation:

A: Recommended.

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Although babies are now routinely vaccinated for hepatitis B virus shortly after birth, rates of maternal hepatitis B virus infection have increased by more than 5 percent each year since 1998. This is why it is important to screen all pregnant people.

“Screening for hepatitis B in pregnant people can protect babies from lifelong chronic conditions, such as liver cancer or liver disease,” says Task Force member Melissa A. Simon, M.D., M.P.H. “This is essential because the primary source of hepatitis B in children is transmission at birth.”

With early detection, clinicians can better prevent transmission from mother to child with careful case management, interventions, and planning.

“Clinicians can help mothers and their babies by screening all pregnant people at their first prenatal visit for hepatitis B,” says Task Force member John Wong, M.D. “Screening helps pregnant people get appropriate care throughout their pregnancy and helps reduce the chances of transmitting the virus to the baby.”

This recommendation statement and corresponding evidence summary have been published online in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and posted on the Task Force website at <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A draft version of the recommendation statement was available for public comment from January 8, 2019 to February 4, 2019.

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, the 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. Wong is chief of the Division of Clinical Decision Making and a primary care clinician in the Department of Medicine at Tufts Medical Center and a professor of medicine at the Tufts University School of Medicine. He is also the director of comparative effectiveness research for the Tufts Clinical

Translational Science Institute and a professor of medicine in the Tufts University Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences.

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