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News Release

## Hepatitis B Immunization is Critical to Protect All Newborns

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ITASCA, IL - The decision by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to downgrade its recommendations to protect infants from hepatitis B is a dangerous move that will harm children, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

“This irresponsible and purposely misleading guidance will lead to more hepatitis B infections in infants and children,” said American Academy of Pediatrics President Susan J. Kressly, MD, FAAP. “I want to reassure parents and clinicians that there is no new or concerning information about the hepatitis B vaccine that is prompting this change, nor has children’s risk of contracting hepatitis B changed. Instead, this is the result of a deliberate strategy to sow fear and distrust among families.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics continues to [recommend](#) routine hepatitis B vaccination for all newborns: All babies should receive a first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth, a second dose at one to two months, and a third dose at six

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months. The pacing of these doses has been rigorously tested and proven to be safe and effective over several decades.

Vaccinating all newborns against hepatitis B effectively prevents transmission of the virus to newborns during childbirth, supports them to build immunity against potential childhood infections, and ensures long-term protection into adulthood from a virus that can cause serious liver disease and liver cancer. Infants and children can be exposed to this virus by close caregivers who may not know they are infected. Delaying the birth dose of the hepatitis B vaccine has no clear benefits and leaves children vulnerable to infection.

When the first hepatitis B vaccine was introduced in the United States in 1981, the U.S. government recommended immunizing infants at [high-risk](#) of infection only. Over time, doctors and scientists realized that this risk-based strategy was not working—many children were still becoming infected. That's why pediatricians, obstetricians, gynecologists, liver specialists and public health professionals encouraged the government to consider a new approach that would protect more children from infection. In 1991, the U.S. began recommending that infants receive their first hepatitis B vaccine dose at birth. Since then, there has been a [99% reduction in infant hepatitis B infections](#).

In medicine, the shared clinical decision-making designation is not intended for interventions with clear, evidence-based benefits to a broad population, such as a safe vaccine that offers an important benefit to all newborns. Instead, a universal recommendation—such as what AAP continues to make for the hepatitis B birth dose -- offers clear guidance to pediatricians

and families that the vaccine is important and beneficial. Pediatricians are ready to discuss the vaccine with families, review benefits and potential side effects, and collaborate with parents to make informed decisions about their child's health.

“The American Academy of Pediatrics will continue to provide clear, evidence-backed guidance on routine childhood immunizations. I encourage parents, expecting parents and caregivers to talk with their pediatricians and doctors if they have questions about the hepatitis B vaccine,” said Dr. Kressly.

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*The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.*

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