

## **This information is for you if you are pregnant and have a positive test result for hepatitis B**

### **Here you will find information about:**

- being hepatitis B positive; and
- ways in which you can stop hepatitis B being passed to your baby.

### **What your blood test result means**

Your blood test result means that at some time, you acquired the hepatitis B virus (that is, the virus was passed to you) and you are now a carrier of the virus.

It is unlikely that the virus will pass to your baby while you are pregnant, but there is a high chance that you could pass the virus to your baby during the birth.

### **What is hepatitis B?**

Hepatitis B is a virus which attacks the liver. Many people who carry hepatitis B have no symptoms and may not know they have the virus until they have a test. Some people who have this virus never get rid of it from their body even though they seem well. Even if you do not have any symptoms, you can still pass the virus to other people.

### **How am I hepatitis B positive?**

Hepatitis B can be passed on in the following ways:

- A mother who has hepatitis B, passing the infection to her baby when giving birth.
- Having condomless sex (sex without an external condom worn on the penis or an internal condom worn inside the vagina) with someone who has hepatitis B.
- Being scratched by used needles and other sharp items which might have blood on them (sometimes called a 'needle stick injury').

You cannot pass the virus to other people during normal social contact, for example, sharing towels, sharing cutlery, being with friends and family and eating meals together.

### **What will happen next ?**

We need to confirm this result by taking another blood sample from you. It is very unlikely that this result will be any different. At the same time, we will do another blood test, which will give us more information about any treatment you and your baby may need. We will send the results of this test to the specialist before you have an appointment.

The specialist team will give you advice about preventing infection in your baby and will carry out tests to see if you need any treatment yourself. Hepatitis B can affect the liver, and some people need treatment to prevent the liver from being damaged.

### **What treatment can my baby have?**

A safe and effective course of vaccinations is available to protect your baby from the virus. These vaccines given to your baby can protect them from the virus and developing liver problems. If your blood test result shows that the hepatitis B virus you have is highly infectious, we will offer your baby another injection at the same time to give extra protection against the virus.

If your baby does not receive treatment there is a 90% (9 in 10) chance that they will catch the virus, carry hepatitis B for life and be at risk of developing severe problems such as liver damage in later life.

All babies are offered protection against hepatitis B as part of the routine infant vaccinations. Babies whose mothers are hepatitis B positive will need six vaccinations to get the best protection.

- The first vaccination should be given within 24 hours of the birth.

Your baby will need five more vaccinations. These are given when your baby is:

- one month old
- two months old, three months old, and four months old (as part of the routine infant vaccinations); and
- 12 to 13 months old.

It is very important that your baby receives the full course of the vaccinations.

After completing the course of vaccinations your baby will have a blood test to make sure they do not have hepatitis B.

### **How can I stay healthy with hepatitis B?**

The following simple things can help you stay healthy.

- Do not drink alcohol– it can damage your liver.
- Tell your doctor that you are a hepatitis B carrier and ask about any treatment or tests that might help.
- Ask a doctor before you take any medicine, even herbal medicines or medicines that can be bought without a prescription.
- Never inject drugs. This can give you two other types of hepatitis infection (hepatitis C and D) which can also damage your liver. Contact a drug-treatment centre if you need help to stop using drugs.

### **Who needs to know that I am hepatitis B positive?**

For you and your baby to have the best care, it is necessary to receive care from a number of specialists - for example, the hepatitis B specialist team, an obstetrician (hospital doctor) and a paediatrician (baby and child doctor).

Your midwife will ask you if they can share information about you with these specialists before the specialists become involved with your care.

You may want to ask your specialist team how to explain your positive test results to your partner. If your partner does not know whether they have hepatitis B, you should use condoms to prevent the virus being passed to your partner. Your partner should consider getting tested for hepatitis B. They can go to their GP surgery or sexual-health clinic and ask for a hepatitis B test.

### **Where can I get more information?**

You can get more information about hepatitis B and antenatal tests from the hospital midwife who specialises in antenatal screening or from the hospital doctor (the obstetrician).

### **You can also contact the British Liver Trust at:**

The British Liver Trust

Phone: 0800 6527330 (10am to 3pm Monday to Friday)

Website: [www.britishlivertrust.org.uk](http://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk)