



# Me, my baby and Hepatitis B

Viêm gan B

التهاب الكبد B

乙肝

This booklet aims to support discussion between pregnant women who have hepatitis B and health workers.

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## PHONE SUPPORT

**Telephone Interpreter Service**

P: 13 14 50

**Nurse on Call** – 24 hrs

P: 1300 60 60 24

**Liverwell** – LiverLine

P: 1800 703 003

**Cancer Council** – Talk to a nurse

P: 13 11 20

## Having a hepatitis B test in pregnancy

In Australia, all pregnant women are offered a hepatitis B blood test early in pregnancy. It is important to stop hepatitis B being passed on to the baby.

**Vaccines and good medical care can stop the spread of hepatitis B and help to prevent most problems.**

Your blood tests show that you have hepatitis B. It's likely that you got it as a very young baby. Hepatitis B is a chronic disease, meaning you will have it throughout your life. Good medical care can prevent problems. It can be helpful to talk to your midwife or doctor or someone you trust.

**Women with hepatitis B can deliver their baby safely and can breastfeed.**

Your midwife and doctor will help to manage hepatitis B and keep you and your baby healthy.

Your GP will ask you to see a special hepatitis doctor (Gastroenterologist or Infectious Disease doctor). The hepatitis doctor will check your health and work out a plan to prevent your baby from getting hepatitis B.



*The GP explains about the liver, hepatitis B and your baby.*

# What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus, or germ, that can cause liver damage and liver cancer.

**Millions of people all around the world have hepatitis B.**

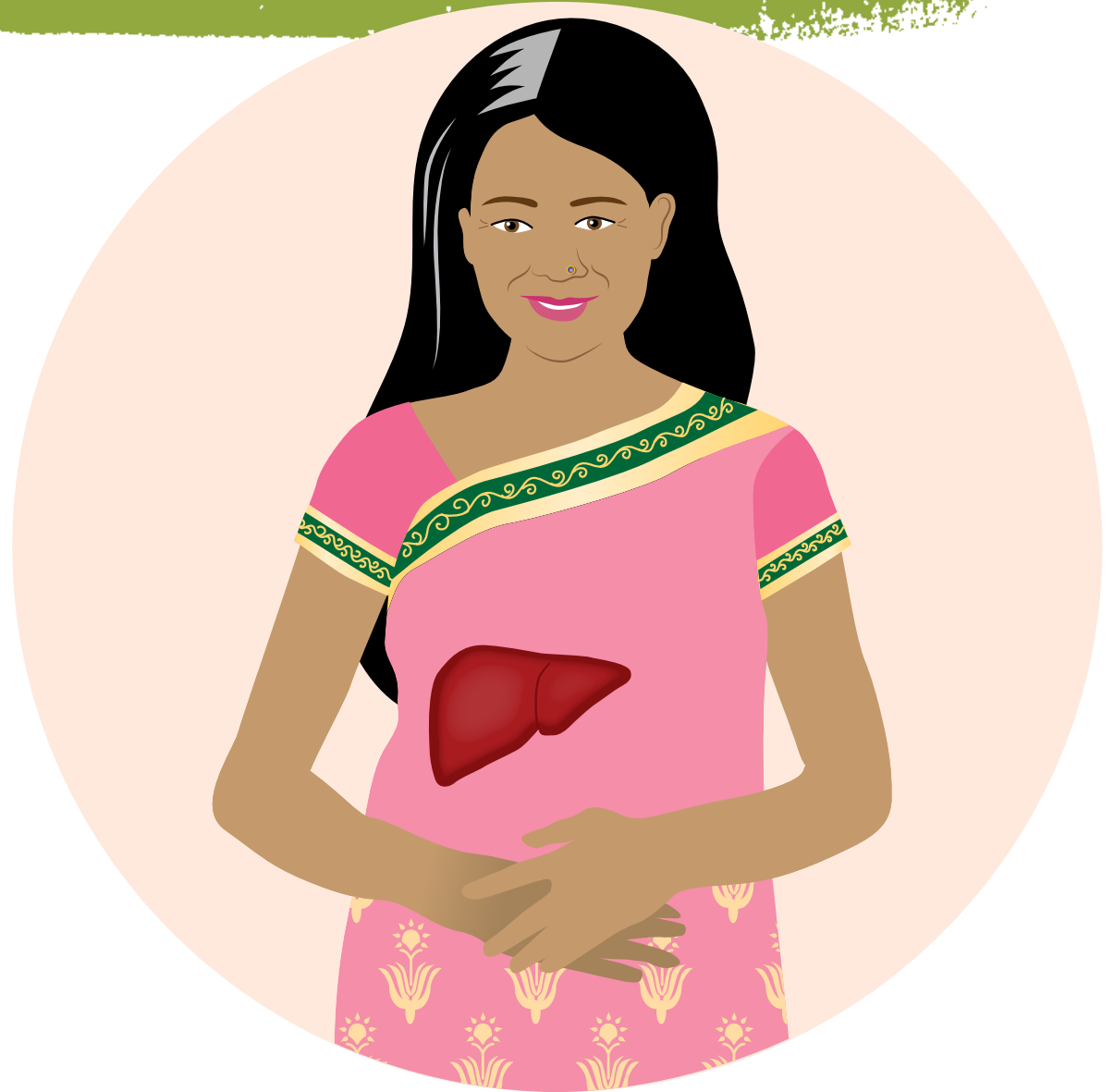
The hepatitis B virus is so small it can only be seen in the blood with a microscope. Your blood test shows that you have hepatitis B. The virus is spread through blood and sexual fluids.

**The hepatitis B virus can live inside you for a long time without causing you to feel sick.**

But the virus may be hurting your liver. Your liver is important to keep you healthy. It helps to clean the blood. If your liver is damaged, it cannot do its job well and may cause serious health problems.



**Remember** – good health care can prevent problems for you and your baby.



*The liver is on the right side of your body near the ribs.*

## Women with hepatitis B can deliver their baby safely and can breastfeed.

Women with hepatitis B can deliver their baby by vaginal birth. Women with hepatitis B are encouraged to breastfeed their baby. Breastfeeding helps you and your baby to be strong and healthy.

**Talk with your midwife or doctor about the delivery and feeding your baby.**



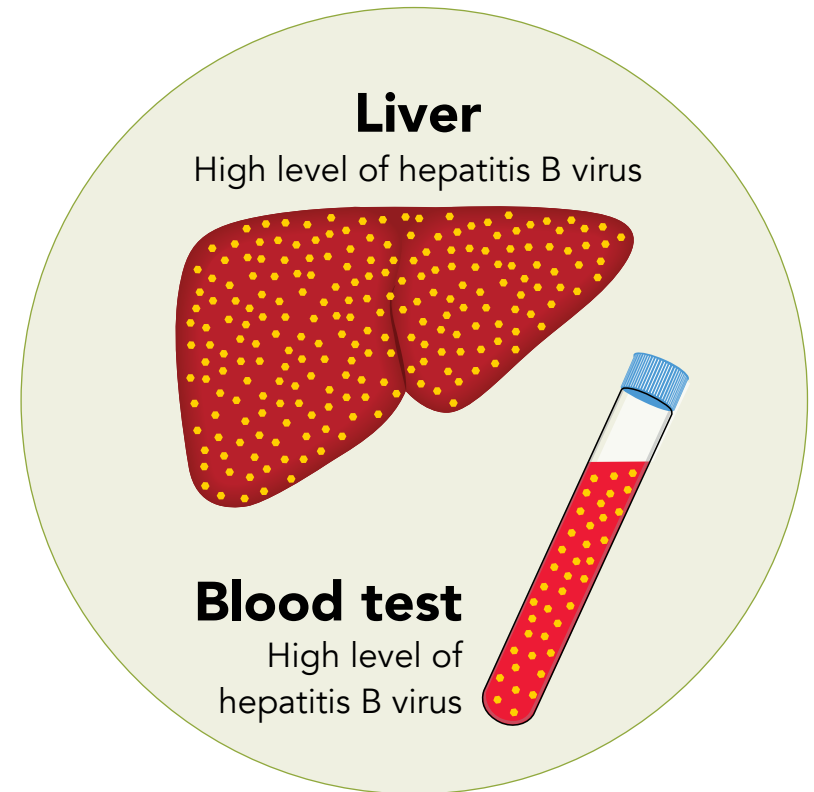
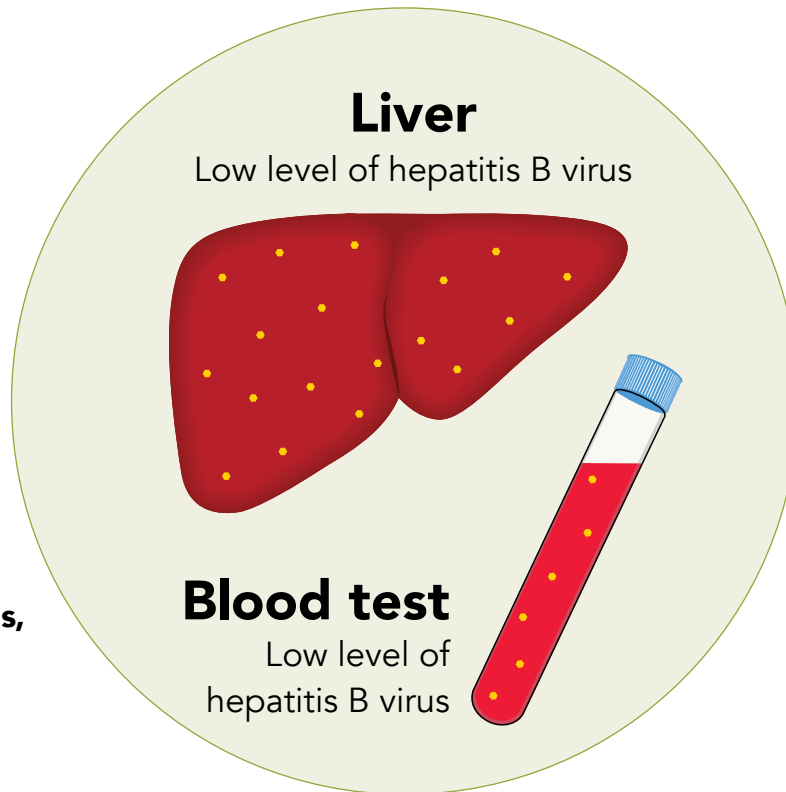
*Women with hepatitis B can deliver their baby safely and can breastfeed.*

# The blood tests tell us how much virus you have

During pregnancy you will need more blood tests to show us how much of the hepatitis B virus is in your blood.

Some women will have a low level of hepatitis B virus and some will have a high level of virus in the blood.

**If your blood test shows you have a high level of hepatitis B virus, you may need to start taking tablets during your pregnancy.**



**Remember** – regular check-ups helps you and your baby stay safe.

## Some women need treatment

There are tablets that make the level of hepatitis B virus in your blood very low. When the virus level is very low, the chance of your baby getting hepatitis B is very low.

The tablets are called Tenofovir

**The tablets are safe for you and your baby – when you are pregnant and if you are breastfeeding.**



**Remember** – YOU, your doctor and midwife can manage hepatitis B well.

*Tenofovir tablets bring down the level of virus in your blood.*



## The birth – preventing your baby from getting hepatitis B

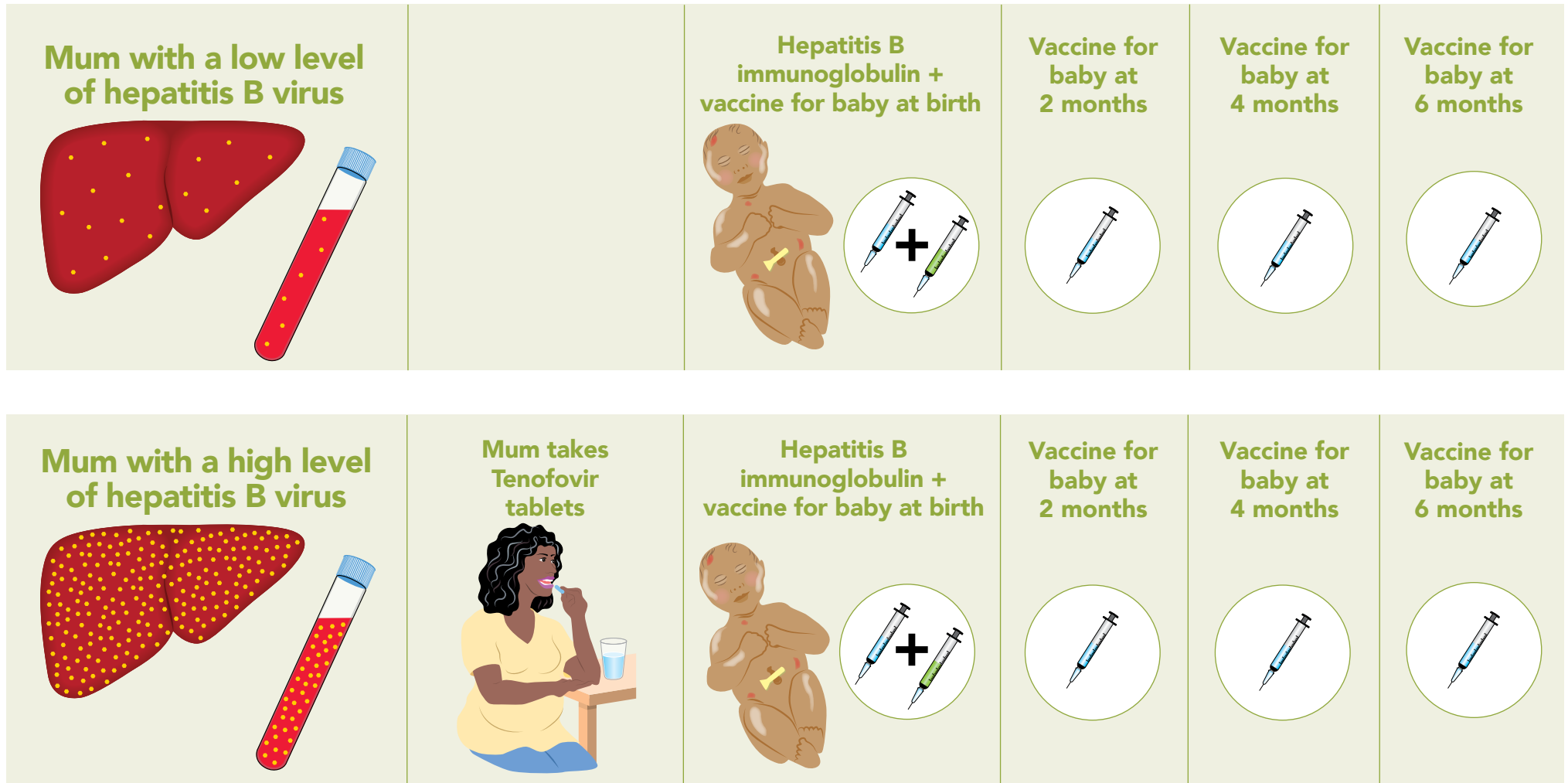
**Your baby will need 2 injections on the day they are born.**

These injections are free for most babies.

- 1 The first injection is the Hepatitis B vaccine. Australia provides hepatitis B vaccine for ALL new born babies. The vaccine protects people from getting hepatitis B.
- 2 The second injection is a special medicine (**Hepatitis B Immunoglobulin or HBIG**) for **babies if the mum has hepatitis B**. This medicine boosts your baby's body to fight off any hepatitis B virus, which may have leaked into your baby's blood during the birth.



# Stopping the spread of hepatitis B



## Other ways to stop the spread of hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is spread when the blood or sexual fluids of a person who has hepatitis B, gets inside the body of another person. But it is easy to stop this from happening.

**Vaccination protects people from getting hepatitis B and it is the best way to stop the spread.**

Your sexual partner/s, close family and household members first need to have a check-up for hepatitis B. This will tell them if they need a hepatitis B vaccination. Most people can get the vaccines for free.

**Other ways to stop the spread of hepatitis B are:**



*Ask your family members to get a check-up and vaccination for hepatitis B if needed.*



*Clean up blood quickly.*

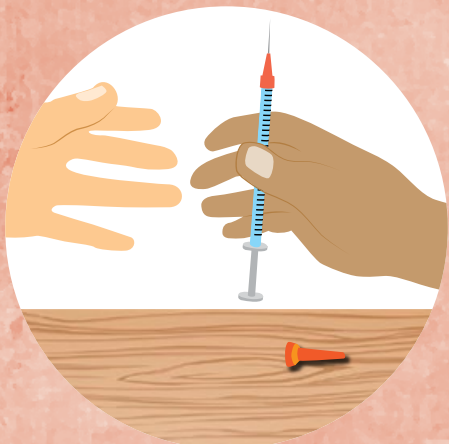


*Use condoms or dams when having sex with a new partner or person who is not vaccinated.*

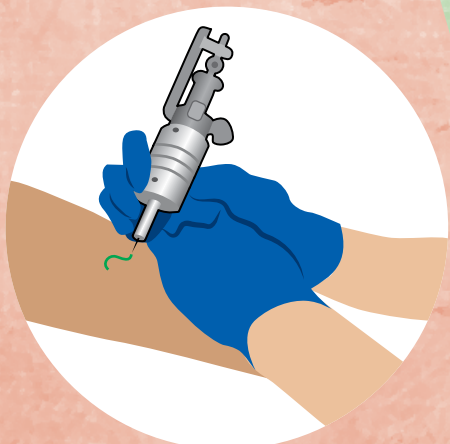
It is **not safe** to do these things:



**Do not share** toothbrushes or razors.



**Do not share** needles and injecting equipment.



**Do not share** equipment for tattoos or piercing.

It is **safe** to do these things:



It is **safe** to hug and kiss family and friends.

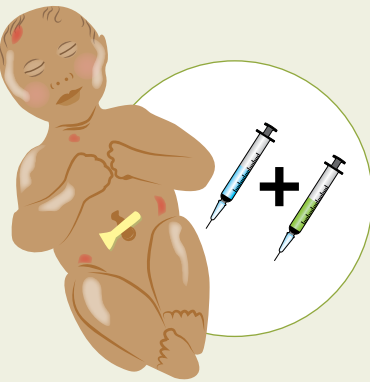

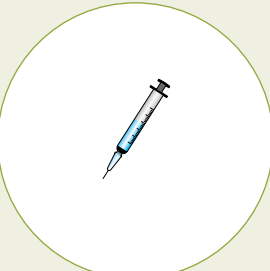
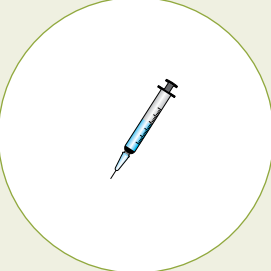


It is **safe** to breast-feed your baby.



It is **safe** to share a meal, food and drinks with family and friends.

# At home after the birth: Care for your BABY

			
<b>Birth</b> Check that your baby gets 2 injections.	<b>Age 2 months</b> Check that baby has 2nd hepatitis B vaccine.	<b>Age 4 months</b> Check that baby has 3rd hepatitis B vaccine.	<b>Age 6 months</b> Check that baby has 4th hepatitis B vaccine.



## Age 9–18 months

Check that your baby gets a blood test to check for hepatitis B.

**You don't need to worry.  
You have managed your  
baby's health care so well!**



Tick off your baby's vaccinations in their Green Book. Take the Green Book to health appointments.



# At home after the birth: Care for YOU



Ask your GP about hepatitis B at your 6 week mum and baby check-up. If you started taking hepatitis B tablets, you need to continue taking them until for doctor says so.

**Ask your GP when you need to see the special hepatitis doctor.**

Date due: .....



Because you have hepatitis B, you have a higher chance of getting liver disease than people who do not have hepatitis B.

**You need to have check-ups every 6 – 12 months, even if you feel well.**

Check-ups can show if hepatitis B is hurting your liver and then the doctor can start you on treatment to help.

Date due: .....



**Talk with your family.** Have they had all the hepatitis B vaccines? A blood test can check this for them. Most people can get the hepatitis B vaccine for free.

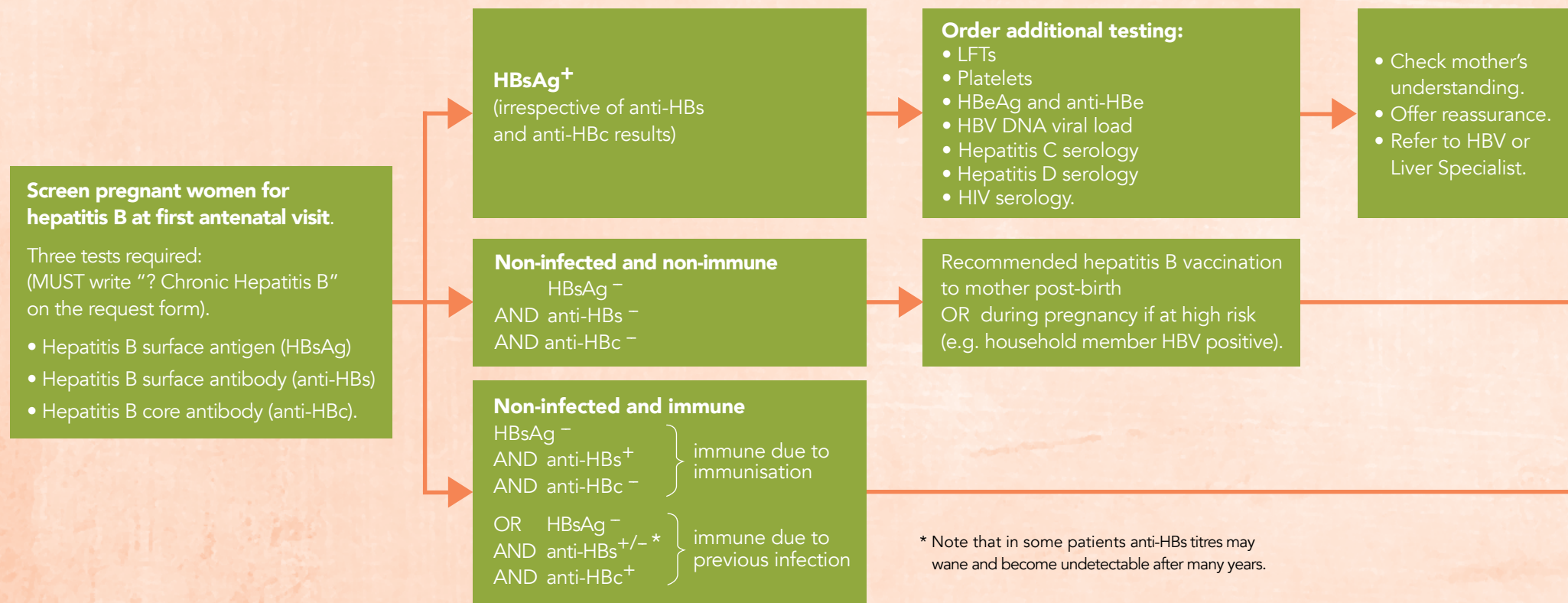
Date due: .....



**Remember** – You, your nurse and doctor can manage hepatitis B well and help to prevent serious sickness.

# Clinician's Quick Guide – Hepatitis B testing and management in pregnancy and beyond

## ANTENATAL CARE



## Be clear in your communication

- Offer an interpreter. Telephone Interpreter Service. P: 13 14 50.
- Offer reassurance that HBV can be managed well
- Use short sentences, avoid medical jargon
- Reinforce discussion with written information in preferred language
- Consider using “teach-back” to check for understanding.



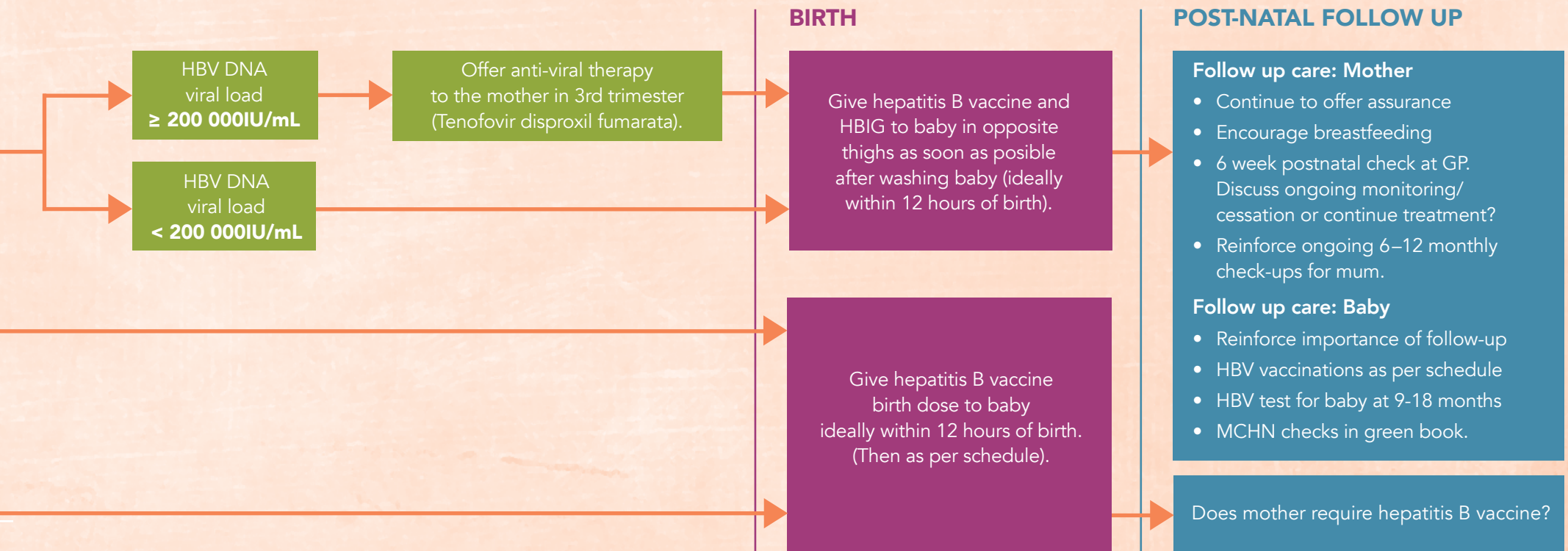
Teach-back: a technique for clear communication video

HBV information for clinicians:

<https://www.hepbhelp.org.au/>

<https://ashm.org.au/resources/decision-making-in-hepatitis-b/>

<https://www.gesa.org.au>



**Reference:**

Hepatitis B Consensus Statement Working Group. *Australian consensus recommendations for the management of hepatitis B infection*. Melbourne: Gastroenterological Society of Australia, 2022

*Management of Hepatitis B in Pregnancy*. RANZCOG, 2019  
<https://wpstaging.ranzcog.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Management-of-Hepatitis-B-in-pregnancy-C-Obs-50.pdf>

*The Australian Immunisation Handbook*. Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care. 2018  
<https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au>



## WANT MORE INFORMATION?



Scan  
The Hepatitis B Story



Scan  
Health Translations Directory



Scan  
Infant hepatitis B - birth dose

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many health workers and women contributed to the development of this resource: your thoughts and time are greatly appreciated.

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