



Newborn Hepatitis B Vaccination Rates Drop

Rates dropped by more than 10% since 2023.

March 2, 2026 By Eva Lorenz

Newborn [hepatitis B](#) virus ([HBV](#)) [vaccine](#) rates rose from 67.5% in January 2017 to a high of 83.5% in February 2023 before dropping to 73.2% in August 2025, according to a [2026 study from the Journal of American Medicine Association](#). The findings were published as childhood vaccination is widely debated and newborn hep B vaccine [recommendations](#) recently changed.

“While no single explanation can be identified, the decline coincides with a period of heightened public discourse in the U.S. regarding childhood vaccination following the [COVID-19](#) pandemic, including high-visibility media coverage and [policy](#) discussions that may have influenced perceptions of vaccine safety, clinician recommendations and parent decisions,” wrote the study’s authors.

Hep B is a highly contagious virus that spreads through bodily fluids, including blood or semen. Thus, pregnant women who have HBV can pass it on to their [infants](#) during childbirth. Vaccines are the best way to prevent the spread of infection. Untreated HBV, or chronic hep B, can cause serious liver complications, including [cirrhosis](#) and [liver cancer](#).

To learn more about HBV, read Hep’s [Hepatitis B Basics](#).

The study included electronic health records from nearly 12.5 million infants born between January 2017 and August 2025. The data used in the study do not represent a complete national census, and the trends could partly reflect shifts in data coverage rather than changes in the population. Still, the study serves as a valuable tool for understanding a changing culture around vaccines.

“A lot of families are talking about vaccines right now, and so we really wanted to understand...when did that shift in the newborn hepatitis B vaccine rates start?” lead study author Joshua M. Rothman, MD, told [MedPage Today](#). “And then, what could have influenced that shift?”

We really wanted to know how much those rates were declining.”

Amid declining rates of hep B vaccination, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommended a change in the schedule for the [hep B](#) vaccine in December 2025. Instead of vaccinating all children at birth, the children of mothers who test negative for HBV would receive their first vaccine dose at 2 months of age, despite a lack of evidence supporting a delayed administration.

To learn more about changing hep B vaccine recommendations, read “[Many Adults Underestimate Hepatitis B Virus and Vaccination Benefits](#)” and “[American Academy of Pediatrics Finds No Reason to Delay Hepatitis B Vaccination](#)”