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Tuscarawas County
Health Department

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Tuscarawas County Health Department Shares Importance of Preventing Perinatal Hepatitis B Transmission in High-Risk Infants

DOVER—In Tuscarawas County and across the world, pregnant mothers could be at risk of transmitting hepatitis B to their babies. Thankfully, according to Tuscarawas County Health Department (TCHD) communicable disease professionals, there are action steps that moms-to-be can take to prevent transmission of hepatitis B to high-risk infants.

Hepatitis B is a contagious liver disease resulting from an infection with hepatitis B virus. The virus can spread from an infected mother to her newborn baby during either a vaginal delivery or a c-section. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines state that every pregnant woman should be tested for the virus early during a prenatal visit, even if she has been previously tested or vaccinated.

According to ODH, there are two reasons a baby would be considered "high-risk" for hepatitis B:

- 1) Baby is born to a mother known to have hepatitis B,
- 2) and the mother's hepatitis B status at delivery of the baby is unknown.

Babies identified as "high-risk" should receive two shots within 12 hours after birth to help prevent the baby from getting hepatitis B. One is the first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine, and second shot is the HBIG (hepatitis B immune globulin). HBIG gives the baby's body extra help to fight the virus at birth. Babies not identified as "high-risk" will only receive the first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine at birth. All babies need to finish their hepatitis B vaccine series of 3 to 4 shots, depending on the vaccine brand. The second dose is given at 1-2 months of age, and the third is given at 6-18 months of age. High-risk babies who received HBIG at birth will need blood testing at 9-12 months of age, or one month after the final dose of hepatitis B vaccine, to check that the baby is protected and does not have hepatitis B.

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The Tuscarawas County Health Department Perinatal Hepatitis B Case Manager works with ODH, women's health/obstetric providers, hospitals, and pediatricians to ensure the guidelines are followed in preventing perinatal hepatitis B transmission in high-risk infants.

For more information please see the following website links for the CDC and ODH:

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/perinatalxmtn.htm>

<https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/perinatal-hepatitis-b-prevention/Perinatal-Hepatitis-B-Prevention>

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