



Bulletin No. 27  
December 12, 1994

## Universal Infant Hepatitis B Immunization Program Hospitals Succeed in Disease Prevention

Alaska began a Universal Infant Hepatitis B Immunization Program in February 1993. In order to assess the program, the Section of Epidemiology conducted a written survey of all general hospitals in Alaska (private, military, and Indian Health Service) during April, 1994.

### **Hospital/Patient Participation:**

All 24 Alaska hospitals offer the first dose of HB vaccine to newborns at (or shortly after) birth. An estimated 94% of all newborns received the vaccine prior to hospital discharge. Only 5% (averaged from all hospitals) of parents refused permission for their child to receive the first dose of vaccine.

### **Written Protocols:**

22 hospitals had a written protocol and a standing medical order in place for administering HB vaccine to newborns. 12 hospitals had policies in place for the newborn to receive the first dose of vaccine within 12 hours of birth, as recommended by the Alaska Immunization Program. Reasons hospitals reported for delaying vaccination included: complications of infant or mother, mother in labor and delivery an extended period of time, infant illness, and nurses being unfamiliar with the policy to give the vaccine within 12 hours of birth.

### **Informed Consent:**

23 hospitals indicated they obtained informed consent from parents of all newborns who received HB vaccine.

### **Sharing of Immunization Information:**

10 hospitals reported they keep a log on their obstetric (OB) unit, noting who received dose 1 of HB vaccine and the date of administration. 9 of these hospitals indicated they would share vaccination information with another provider who telephoned their OB unit. Some hospitals refer the call to their medical records department, and others required written consent before sharing this information.

### **Official Immunization Record:**

The Section of Epidemiology supplies official Alaska Immunization Records to health care providers and parents to document all immunizations. 17 hospitals provided official Alaska Immunization Records to parents of newborns at birth, and recorded the date dose 1 of HB vaccine was administered. Of the 7 hospitals who did not use the official Alaska record, 5 provided comparable information on a different form or card.

### **Referral to a Primary Provider:**

22 hospitals indicated they referred infants who received dose 1 of HB vaccine in the hospital to a primary provider for doses 2 and 3. Referral systems described by hospitals varied from verbal discharge instructions regarding where to go for subsequent doses of vaccine to providing copies of newborn records noting the date of dose 1 of HB vaccine to identified primary providers, public health nurses, and parents. Several hospitals scheduled well baby exams at discharge, at which time the infant received dose 2 of HB vaccine. Two hospitals indicated they have "tickler files." Seven hospitals reported they conducted follow-up of the HB vaccine series.

**Summary: All 24 general hospitals in Alaska have implemented universal immunization of newborns against hepatitis B. An estimated 94% of all newborns received the first dose of HB vaccine before discharge. Efforts should remain focused on immunizing newborns and assuring they complete the 3 dose vaccine series. Hospitals play a central role in this new program and have done an excellent job of implementing it successfully.**

### **The Section of Epidemiology recommends the following:**

- 1. All newborns should receive the first dose of HB vaccine within 12 hours of birth.**

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has stated that infants born to mothers who are hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) positive should receive the vaccine within 12 hours of birth. The sooner after birth the vaccine is administered, the more effective it is in preventing HB infection. Alaska's Infant HB Immunization Program recommends that all infants receive the first dose of vaccine within 12 hours of birth, so that infants born to either surface antigen negative or positive mothers are protected.

- Immunization information should be shared freely among health care providers.**

Unnecessary barriers to obtaining immunization delay the efficient delivery of immunization services.

- Health care providers should obtain informed consent from the infant's parent or legal representative before administering vaccine.**

This is a routine federal requirement for vaccine usage. Camera-ready copies of the HB vaccine information statement are available free-of-charge from the Section of Epidemiology.

- HB vaccination should be documented on an official Alaska Immunization Record provided to parents of newborns.**

These records should be used to record all of a child's immunizations and to stress that it is the parents' responsibility to keep their children up-to-date with immunizations. Alaska Immunization Records are provided free-of-charge from the Section of Epidemiology.

(Special thanks to all hospitals that participated in this survey. Contributed by Sheryl Jacobson, RN, BA, and Diane Ingle, BA, Section of Epidemiology)