

Eliminating vertical transmission of hepatitis B

A silent epidemic with rising mortality

- 350 million people live with viral hepatitis.
- 1 million children acquire viral hepatitis every year. This is not curable but is preventable.
- >80% of children who acquire hepatitis before 1 year old will develop chronic liver disease.
- Eliminating vertical transmission can effectively prevent the majority of liver cancers and cirrhosis, which often hits individuals and families in their most productive years.



Hepatitis B vertical transmission is a mode of transmission also referred to as perinatal transmission. During and immediately after birth, children are at more vulnerable to acquiring hepatitis because of exposure to blood and other body fluids. Eliminating this mode of transmission is a priority for The Hepatitis Fund.

What is vertical transmission of hepatitis B?



Highly effective interventions exist now

- Childhood vaccination for hepatitis B is 95-100% effective. It is safe, affordable and offers lifelong protection, but only 6% of African newborns receive birth-dose vaccines.
- Screening and treating mothers living with hepatitis B to prevent transmission is simple and cost effective.
- Combined, these interventions will set the course for a whole generation of hepatitis-free children.

As per the World Health Organization (WHO) strategy for triple elimination of vertical transmission (HBV, HIV and syphilis), a comprehensive package of interventions, fully integrated with existing maternal health services, is needed to achieve the global goal of elimination of vertical transmission of hepatitis B. This includes:

- A robust and timely hepatitis B vaccination programme
- Strong reproductive and maternal and child health services aimed at preventing infection of young women
- Screening and care of pregnant women with chronic hepatitis B, the possible use of antiviral drugs and hepatitis B immunoglobulin among infants born to hepatitis B-positive mothers