

Infant Hepatitis B Testing for HBsAG Surface Antigen at 12 months in NHS England South (South West) area – Summary

As per NHS Employers – Vaccinations and Immunisations Programmes 2016-17

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/primary-care-contacts/general-medical-services/vaccination-and-immunisation/2016-17-vaccination-and-immunisation>

Primary Care is responsible for the vaccination and testing of vulnerable infants born to Hepatitis B positive mothers. Completion of the vaccination schedule is critical to minimise the risk of the child becoming infected. Without vaccination, chronic infection occurs in about 90 per cent of infants who are infected perinatally.

Infants with Hepatitis B infection are usually asymptomatic and do not display signs of infection at the time of testing. Serology testing infants born to Hepatitis B positive mothers at 12 months of age (at the same time as the 4th vaccination) is important to enable a timely assessment and referral for paediatric assessment and management where appropriate, reducing the risk of long term complications and disease in later life.

Dried Blood Spot testing

To improve ease and uptake of serology testing, Public Health England (PHE) has developed a free dried blood spot (DBS) test that has been validated for detecting hepatitis B surface antigen. The test uses a single-use safety lancet to prick the heel of the infant allowing health care professionals to obtain blood that is applied to a filter paper. This is posted to the laboratory at PHE Colindale.

Benefits of offering the dried blood spot test in primary care include:

- removing the need for patients to travel long distances to specialist clinics
- removing the need for practices to check that the patient has attended hospital serology appointments and to chase further appointments where necessary
- reducing the risk of non-attendance at hospital appointment and subsequent potential clinical risk regarding long term complications and disease in later life.

Local arrangements:

The following local arrangements are informed by national guidance (including guidance on how to undertake a DBS):

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hepatitis-b-dried-blood-spot-dbs-testing-for-infants>

- PHE Screening and Immunisation Team will oversee the local DBS scheme and act as the hub for ordering of DBS kits that are then distributed to local Child Health Information (CHIS) teams

- CHIS will administer the DBS scheme and will send out a DBS kit to the practice at the same time as scheduling the infant for the 4th vaccination at 12 months
- The practice will undertake serology testing using the DBS kit as per enclosed instructions, complete the paperwork, and post the kit to the PHE lab at Colindale
- The PHE lab will send to the infant's GP a laboratory report outlining the serology results and any further public health actions. An electronic copy of the report will also be made available to the PHE Screening and Immunisation Coordinator who is responsible for overseeing the local DBS scheme
- The GP will inform parents and CHIS of the DBS test result and record in the child's medical record
- In the event of a positive test for Hepatitis B, the GP will refer the baby for paediatric assessment and management.

For any queries in relation to Dry Blood Spot testing please contact:

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