



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Corning Tower

The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Albany, New York 12237

Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H. Dr.P.H.
Commissioner

Dennis P. Whalen
Executive Deputy Commissioner

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Dear Hospital Administrator/Medical Director:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you about an important new program of the New York State Department of Health that will provide hepatitis B vaccine at no charge to New York birthing hospitals that agree to adopt a policy to routinely offer hepatitis B vaccination to all newborns at birth.

In October 2001, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted to recommend that a birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine be administered universally to all infants born in the United States. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the American Academy of Family Practitioners (AAFP) had previously issued similar recommendations. The AAP recently issued a summary statement (attached) reaffirming a preference for hepatitis B vaccination at birth. The New York State Department of Health concurs with this recommendation and encourages all New York State birthing hospitals to comply with adopting a universal hepatitis B birth dose policy.

The provision of hepatitis B vaccine to all infants at birth provides a "safety net" to high risk infants who do not receive appropriate prophylactic treatment to prevent hepatitis B virus (HBV) transmission at birth, and to infants who are exposed to HBV postnatally from another family member or caregiver. The department recognizes that the cost of hepatitis B vaccine may be an issue for hospitals. Through this new program, the department hopes to eliminate additional hospital costs for vaccine purchase and improve hospital compliance with recommended standards of practice. The primary goal of the program is to eliminate transmission of HBV.

To qualify for this program, please submit the enclosed "Hepatitis B Birth Dose Program Application," along with a copy of your hospital's universal hepatitis B birth dose policy. Your policy must clearly state that hepatitis B vaccine is to be offered to all newborns. As with all childhood immunizations, medical and religious exemptions are recognized in our state, and because the administration of hepatitis B vaccine at birth is recommended, but not mandated by state law, some parents may choose to defer immunization until a later time.

We encourage your participation in this important program and commend you for your compliance with the recommendation to protect all infants from transmission of hepatitis B infection by implementing a universal hepatitis B birth dose policy in your hospital. Further questions about this program may be directed to Elizabeth Herlihy, RN, MS, Perinatal Hepatitis B Program Manager, at (518) 473-4437.

Sincerely,

Debra S. Blog, M.D., M.P.H.
Immunization Program
NYS Department of Health

Enclosures

cc: Pediatric Medical Director
Pharmacy Director
Labor/Delivery/Nursery Managers
Regional DOH Offices
Local Health Departments