

NY Hospitals Struggle to Vaccinate Newborns Against Hep B

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New data released by the New York State Department of Health has revealed that in 2013, more than half of the state's birthing hospitals did not meet the 90 percent bar set by health officials for vaccinating newborns against the hepatitis B virus (HBV), the New York World [reports](#).

Currently, New York State recommends that all newborns be inoculated against the viral liver disease within 72 hours of birth. However, the DOH data, which excludes New York City, has put the state's vaccination rate during this time window at 80 percent. Overall, New York currently ranks 45th in the country in terms of infant hepatitis B vaccination.

During interviews, public health experts offered a number of explanations for the state's struggle to vaccinate babies, including lax hospital policies and pushback from pediatricians who often advise parents to vaccinate their infants at a later time. Some doctors referred to this as "turf wars" between hospitals and private practices.

Doctors warn that delaying vaccination even for as little as three days could potentially lead to babies becoming infected if they were accidentally exposed to hepatitis B at birth or to an infected person at home. Hepatitis B is considered to be 100 times more infectious than HIV and currently has no cure.

New York State also currently has some of the highest hepatitis B rates in the country, which is likely related to its large Asian population. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in 12 Asian Americans are currently affected by the disease, compared to just 1 percent of the general population.
