



PHE national free dried blood spot (DBS) testing service for infants born to hepatitis B positive mothers

Public Health England (PHE) Colindale provides a DBS testing service for infants born to hepatitis B positive mothers. The service is free of charge and has been designed to improve the coverage of follow up testing in primary care of all infants born to hepatitis B positive mothers.

Infants born to hepatitis B positive mothers are at risk of infection around the time of birth and therefore are recommended to have post-exposure vaccination starting at birth. In autumn 2017, a hexavalent vaccine containing hepatitis B (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB) was introduced into the routine childhood immunisation programme. At risk infants born after 1 August 2017 should still be offered monovalent hepatitis B vaccine at birth and 4 weeks of age followed by three doses of the hexavalent vaccine (Infanrix hexa®) at 8, 12 and 16 weeks of age (routine childhood schedule). They should receive a booster dose of monovalent hepatitis B vaccine at 12 months of age, at which time they should also have a blood test to check for infection. Testing infants for hepatitis B surface antigen at the age of 12 months will identify any infants for whom hepatitis B vaccination has not been successful and who have become chronically infected. Testing at risk infants at this age will allow early referral for specialist management of those who have developed persistent hepatitis B infection.

To improve ease and uptake of testing, particularly in primary care, PHE has developed a dried blood spot (DBS) test that has been validated for detecting hepatitis B surface antigen. The DBS test uses a single-use safety lancet to prick the heel of the infant allowing healthcare professionals in GP surgeries, community hospitals and clinics to obtain several drops of blood, which is then applied to a filter paper with speed and little discomfort.

Simple standard infection control precautions prevent any risk of cross-infection and allowing the blood to air dry onto the filter paper renders it safe for posting to the laboratory at Public Health England - Colindale.

Screening and Immunisation leads and managers in local area teams who feel this free of charge service could help to increase the uptake of testing of at risk infants at 12 months of age are encouraged to express their interest in the service.

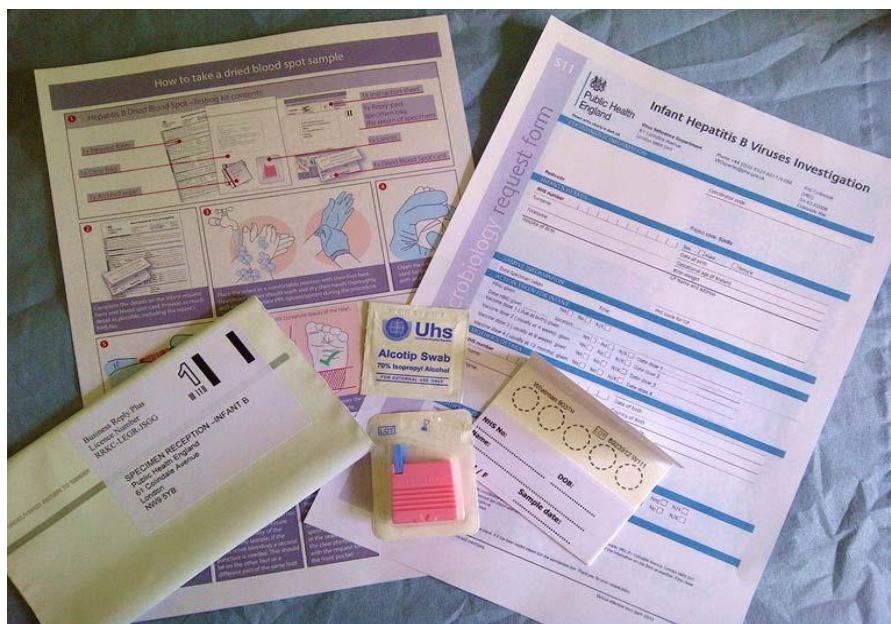
Service documents

PHE has developed a range of documents to support Screening and Immunisation Teams to implement the DBS service which are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hepatitis-b-guidance-data-and-analysis>

These include:

1. the national DBS testing service for infants born to hepatitis B positive mothers: a guide to the service
2. rationale for not requiring high anti-HBs levels in infants born to HBsAg positive mothers
3. how to take a good quality blood spot sample- PowerPoint presentation for healthcare professionals
4. how to take a dried blood spot sample - demonstration video
5. introducing parents to dried blood spot testing- information for parents

DBS testing kit



Joining the service

If you are interested in using the service, you should:

- visit the Public Health England's dedicated website pages on hepatitis B DBS testing for infants at; <https://www.gov.uk/hepatitis-b-dried-blood-spot-dbs-testing-for-infants>
- read the document entitled **National Dried Blood Spot Testing Service for Infants of Hepatitis B Positive Mothers** and check that your organisation is able to meet the essential roles and responsibilities of the service.
- email the hepatitis B at-risk infants surveillance team at PHE Colindale at hepatitisbbabies@phe.gov.uk

PHE supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals