

Public Health England South West Infant Dried Blood Spot testing for Hepatitis B (HBsAG)

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 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. 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 (DBS) testing

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

Offering the dried blood spot test in primary care will:

- remove the need for patients to travel long distances to specialist clinics and help prevent dropout rates which increase with the number of visits required
- reduce the risk of non-attendance at hospital appointment and subsequent potential clinical risk regarding long term complications and disease in later life
- remove the need for practices to check that the patient has attended hospital serology appointments and chase further appointments where necessary

Local arrangements:

The following local arrangements are informed by national guidance as described in the link below (the link includes clear 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 oversee the DBS scheme locally acting as the hub for kits which are then distributed to local CHIS teams.
- CHIS administer the DBS kits and will send out a kit at the same time as scheduling the infant for the 4th vaccination at 12 months

- Kit instructions and paperwork are followed and the DBS sample returned to the PHE lab at Colindale
- PHE lab will send the infant's GP a laboratory report outlining the diagnosis 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 DBS scheme locally
- GPs will inform parents and CHIS of the DBS test result and record appropriately
- In the event of a positive test for Hepatitis B, the GP will refer baby for paediatric assessment and management

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

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