



4. Dried Blood Spot Information

Dried Blood Spot Testing

Background

Why test infants of hepatitis B positive mothers for hepatitis B infection?

- infants with hepatitis B infection are usually asymptomatic and do not display signs of infection at the time of testing
- testing infants at 12 months of age is important to enable a timely assessment, reducing the risk of long term complications and disease in later life
- if the infant's blood test is negative, the result provides reassurance to parents that transmission has been avoided and no further action is required
- offering the test enables healthcare professionals to monitor the delivery and impact of immunisation programmes
- recommendations to immunise and test infants have been in place since 2000 (HSC 1998/127) and are recommended in the following documents:
 - National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), Reducing differences in the uptake of immunisations (2009)
 - Department of Health, Service specification for the Neonatal hepatitis B immunisation programme (2012)
 - Department of Health, Hepatitis B antenatal screening and newborn immunisation programme: Best practice guidance (2011)

What are the possible methods for testing these infants?

There are currently two types of tests used to test infants for hepatitis B infection.

- venous blood sample
- dried blood spot test

Dried blood spot testing

What are the advantages of dried blood spot (DBS) testing?

The advantages of using the DBS testing service fall into three categories.

1. **Programme** – The DBS offers a simple method of testing and can be conveniently performed in primary care. Referrals to specialist paediatric phlebotomy clinics are not required.



2. Resources implications – Ideally, testing should be undertaken at the same time as the fourth booster dose of hepatitis B vaccine is administered, reducing the need for additional appointments. Testing infants using DBS is free of charge with the costs borne by Public Health England (PHE). Results will be reported to both the GP and the co-ordinator.

3. Family – Offering the test in primary care is convenient for the family because the test can be performed locally at the GP surgery, community clinic or at the infant's home address—removing the need to travel long distances to specialist paediatric phlebotomy clinics.

How do I perform a DBS Test?

Performing a DBS is very straight forward. However, it is important that all healthcare professionals undertaking the procedure are appropriately trained and are competent and confident in their ability to carry out the procedure in its entirety.

DBS training materials can be accessed on the www.gov.uk website at;

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

For any practitioner who does not feel comfortable performing a DBS, the Screening and Immunisation team are happy to provide 1-1 support in the practice to enable the practitioner to feel competent in obtaining a sample. Please contact the coordinator for your area or e-mail the screening and imms generic e-mail account, as listed below.

How do I get a Dried Blood Spot Kit?

Please contact the Screening and Immunisation Team on England.SCRIMMS@nhs.net