

Question 31 – Week of January 31

A 24 year old white female is 22 weeks pregnant. During a prenatal visit, her liver enzymes were normal but her hepatitis B surface antigen was positive. HBV DNA levels are undetectable.

Which strategy is recommended to best reduce the risk of vertical transmission?

- A. Vaccinate the mother now.
- B. Vaccinate the infant at the time of birth.
- C. Give Hepatitis B immune globulin and vaccinate the infant at the time of birth.
- D. Treat the mother with lamivudine now.
- E. Treat the mother with entecavir now.

Answer: C

In the absence of passive and active immunization, infants born to HBV infected mothers, especially those with active viral replication (high HBV DNA) have a high (>90%) chance of developing chronic HBV. This can be reduced to less than 5% with use of HBV immunoglobulin and vaccine combination. Although there is some evidence that oral antiviral agents will reduce the risk of vertical transmission, they should not replace active/passive vaccination.