

**SOGC RECOMMENDS NEW METHODS OF TESTING FOR THE HEPATITIS B VIRUS
DURING PREGNANCY AND NOVEL THERAPEUTICS TO REDUCE FETAL
TRANSMISSION**

Ottawa, March 10, 2017 - The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (SOGC) recommends new methods of testing for the Hepatitis B virus during pregnancy and novel therapeutics to reduce the risk of infected mothers transmitting the virus to their unborn child. The new guideline, [Hepatitis B and Pregnancy](#), will appear in the March edition of the *Journal of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Canada* (JOGC).

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection can cause chronic liver disease and it is highly contagious. When vaccines are given to the newborns of infected mothers, much of the transmission can be prevented. Some women however, may be identified as having very high viral counts in their blood during pregnancy. These high HBV levels pose a greater risk for newborn infection, even when vaccines are given.

The new guideline recommends all pregnant women should be offered screening for hepatitis B virus surface antigen (HBsAg) in early pregnancy. If found positive, further testing with HBV DNA levels should be offered by 28 weeks. If these levels are high, anti-viral medication may be a recommended therapy for the mother during her last trimester until delivery, in order to significantly reduce the risk of transmission to the newborn.

Perinatal transmission of HBV is the most common mode of acquisition around the world. Although less than one per cent of the Canadian population is currently infected, individuals at greater risk include those who inject drugs, engage in high-risk sexual practices, have had multiple transfusions or were born in country where HBV is prevalent. Prevention is the only treatment as there is currently no cure for HBV infection.

About The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada

The SOGC is one of Canada's oldest national specialty organizations. Established in 1944, the Society's mission is to promote excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology and to



advance the health of women through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and education. The SOGC represents obstetricians/gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals working in the field of sexual reproductive health. For more information visit www.sogc.org.

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