Effectiveness of hepatitis B vaccination in babies born to hepatitis B surface antigen-positive mothers in Italy.

Effectiveness of Hepatitis B Vaccination in Babies Born to Hepatitis B Surface Antigen-Positive Mothers in Italy

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This study examined 522 children born to hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)–positive mothers from 1985 through 1994 and evaluated the protection provided by anti–hepatitis B virus (HBV) immunization at birth. Babies were given hepatitis B immunoglobulin and hepatitis B vaccine at birth. At 5–14 years after immunization, 17 children (3.3%) were anti–HB core antigen positive, and 3 also were HBsAg positive. One carrier child had a double mutation, with substitution of proline-serine at codons 120 (P120S) and 127 (P127S) within the \( \alpha \) determinant of HBsAg. Of the 522 children, 400 (79.2%) of 505 still had protective anti–HBsAg titers \( \geq 10 \) mIU/mL. Thus, HBV vaccination of children born to HBsAg–positive mothers is effective and confers long–term immunity. There is no evidence that the emergence of HBV escape mutants secondary to the immune pressure against wild–type HBV is of concern.
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