

# Drug prevents passage of HBV during pregnancy

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Electron micrograph of hepatitis B virus. Credit: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The antiviral drug telbivudine prevents perinatal transmission of hepatitis B virus (HBV), according to a study in the June issue of *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology*, the official clinical practice journal of the American Gastroenterological Association.

"If we are to decrease the global burden of hepatitis B, we need to start by addressing mother-to-infant transmission, which is the primary pathway of HBV infection," said study author Yuming Wang from Institute for Infectious Diseases, Southwest Hospital, Chongqing, China. "We found that telbivudine not only eliminated vertical transmission of HBV from [pregnant women](#) to their infants, but that it is also safe and well tolerated by [women](#) and infants."

Researchers performed a prospective study of 450 HBV-positive pregnant women with high viral load, or significant HBV in the blood, during the second or third trimester of pregnancy. Two hundred and seventy nine women received telbivudine (600 mg daily) during weeks 24 through 32 of gestation,

and 171 women who were unwilling to take [antiviral drugs](#) participated as controls. At six months after birth, none of the infants whose mothers were given telbivudine tested positive for HBV, compared to 14.7 percent of infants in the control group.

Levels of HBV also decreased for the moms: almost a quarter who received telbivudine had no HBV detectable in their system. Those not on the [antiviral medication](#) all tested positive for HBV. A significantly higher proportion of women given telbivudine had undetectable levels of HBV DNA in cord blood (99.1 percent) than controls (61.5 percent). No severe adverse events or complications were observed in women or infants.

The long-term influence of using telbivudine, especially when compared to the other recommended oral antiviral drug, tenofovir, remains to be explored.

Hepatitis B virus, which has infected nearly two billion people worldwide, is a leading cause of liver disease. Learn more about hepatitis in the [AGA patient brochure](#).

**More information:** Wu, Quanxin, et al.

Telbivudine Prevents Vertical Transmission of Hepatitis B Virus From Women With High Viral Loads: A Prospective Long-Term Study, *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology*, Volume 13(6): 1170-1176. [www.cghjournal.org/article/S15...](http://www.cghjournal.org/article/S15...) (14)01356-1/abstract

Provided by American Gastroenterological Association

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