

# Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) Vaccine

**Immunization protects you from disease. Get protected, get immunized.**

- Vaccines make your immune system stronger by building antibodies, which help prevent diseases.
- Immunization is safe. It is much safer to get immunized than to get this disease.

## Who should have HBV vaccine?

This vaccine is given to Grade 5 students. Children who did not get the vaccine in Grade 5 are eligible for free HBV vaccine until the end of Grade 12.

This vaccine is given to people who are at risk for hepatitis B (e.g., health problems, type of work, lifestyle, contact with the virus). Talk to a public health nurse to find out if you qualify for HBV vaccine for free.

Some adults (e.g., travellers) may benefit from HBV vaccine, but it is not free. Check with your health insurance provider as some plans may cover the cost.

## How many doses of this vaccine are needed?

Most people need 3 doses, which are given over 6 months.

People with some types of health problems may need extra doses.

## Are there other vaccines that protect against hepatitis B?

Some people may have already received hepatitis B vaccine as part of a combined vaccine with hepatitis A (e.g., Twinrix®) or with diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b.

Check with a public health nurse or your healthcare provider if you are not sure if hepatitis B vaccine has already been given.

## How well does the vaccine work?

The vaccine is 95% to 100% effective in healthy people who get all of the doses as recommended.

## Where can I get the vaccine?

The vaccine is offered to Grade 5 students in school. Information about the disease and the vaccine will be sent to the parent/guardian. If you want your child to get the vaccine, you must fill out the consent form and return it to the school.

If you need the vaccine because of your work or university/college program (e.g., some healthcare workers), talk to your workplace health and safety or student health services department.

Anyone who is eligible for free vaccine can contact the public health office in their area.

If you are not eligible for free vaccine, you need to pay for it and should contact a travel health clinic (e.g., [AHS Travel Health Services](#)) or speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

## Are there side effects from HBV vaccine?

Reactions to the vaccine are usually mild and go away in a few days. They may include:

- redness, swelling, and discomfort where the needle was given
- feeling tired or irritable
- headache
- fever
- poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain or diarrhea
- sore throat, cough, runny nose

It is important to stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after immunization because people can have a rare but serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

Unusual reactions can happen. Call Health Link at 811 to report any unusual reactions.

## How can I manage side effects?

- To help with discomfort and swelling, put a cool, wet cloth over the area.
- If you need fever or pain medicine, check with your pharmacist or doctor. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 19 years old because it can cause serious health problems.
- Some people with health problems (e.g., weak immune system) must call their doctor whenever they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your doctor—even if you think the fever was due to immunization.

## Is there anyone who cannot have HBV vaccine?

You may not be able to have the vaccine if you:

- have an allergy to parts of the vaccine—always tell your healthcare provider about allergies.
- had a severe or unusual reaction after this vaccine (or a similar one)—always tell your healthcare provider if you have had reactions.

You can be immunized if you have a mild illness (e.g., cold), even if you have a fever.

## For More Information



Call Health Link at **811**



Go to [immunizealberta.ca](http://immunizealberta.ca)



Go to [myhealth.alberta.ca](http://myhealth.alberta.ca)

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# Quick Facts: Hepatitis B

## What it is

- a virus that causes short-term symptoms including: poor appetite, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, and yellow skin and eyes (jaundice)
- some people have no short term symptoms
- 1 out of 10 adults who are infected with hepatitis B, will have chronic infection
- the younger you are, the higher the chance of chronic infection (e.g., more than 9 out of 10 babies who are infected with hepatitis B will have chronic infection)
- people with chronic hepatitis B infection have it forever and can spread it to others, even if they do not look or feel sick
- chronic infection can lead to liver damage (cirrhosis), liver cancer and death
- 500,000 to 1.2 million people die from hepatitis B-related disease in the world each year

## Who is most at risk

Anyone can get hepatitis B—almost 1 out of 3 people who have it do not have any risk factors. However, people who have the highest risk are those who:

- are born to mothers with hepatitis B infection
- live with someone who has a chronic hepatitis B infection
- are on dialysis
- live in or travel to countries with high rates of hepatitis B disease
- have lifestyle risks of infection (e.g., unprotected sex, sharing injection needles)

## How it spreads

Spread through:

- childbirth (if mother is infected)
- sharing needles, razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes
- equipment that is not cleaned properly (e.g., tattoos, body piercings, acupuncture)
- sex
- human bites
- open sores