

# Hepatitis B (HBV) Vaccine

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

- **Vaccines make your immune system stronger. They build antibodies to help prevent diseases.**
- **Immunization is safe. It is much safer to get immunized than to get this disease.**

## **What is the hepatitis B vaccine?**

The hepatitis B vaccine protects against the hepatitis B virus (HBV).

## **Who should get the hepatitis B vaccine?**

Grade 6 students get the hepatitis B vaccine in school. If you were born in 1981 or later and did not get all the recommended doses in school, you can get the hepatitis B vaccine for free.

You should also get this vaccine if you are at risk for hepatitis B because of:

- certain health problems (such as liver or kidney problems)
- the type of work you do (such as some healthcare workers)
- your lifestyle (such as having unprotected sex or sharing needles)
- possible contact with the virus (such as after having contact with someone else's blood)

Talk to a public health nurse to find out if you can get the hepatitis B vaccine for free.

You may also benefit from the vaccine if you travel to an area that has a high risk of hepatitis B. If you get the vaccine because of travel, it is not free.

If you cannot get the vaccine for free, check with your health insurance provider to see if your plan covers the cost.

## **How many doses do I need?**

Students in Grade 6 need 2 doses, 6 months apart.

Most other people need 3 doses, given over 6 months.

If you have some types of health problems, you may need more doses. Ask your healthcare provider how many doses you need.

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

There are 2 other vaccines that protect against hepatitis B.

**Twinrix** protects against hepatitis A and B. People who travel often get this vaccine.

**DTaP-IPV-Hib-HB** protects against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, and hepatitis B. It is part of the routine vaccines that children get when they are young. Children born on March 1, 2018 or later in Alberta and children born outside of Alberta may have had this vaccine. Check with a public health nurse or your healthcare provider if you are not sure if your child had a hepatitis B vaccine.

## **How well does the vaccine work?**

If you are healthy and get all the recommended doses, the protection for hepatitis B is 95% to 100%.

## **Where can I get the hepatitis B vaccine?**

Grade 6 students can get the vaccine in school. Grade 9 students who missed getting the vaccine at the usual time can also get it in school. Parents and guardians will get information about hepatitis B and the vaccine. If you want your child to get the vaccine in school, you must fill out the consent form and return it to the school.

If you need the vaccine because of your work or what you study (such as some healthcare workers), talk to your workplace health and safety department or your student health services department.

If you can get this vaccine for free, contact the public health office in your area.

If you want the vaccine and need to pay for it, contact a travel health clinic or talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

## Are there side effects from the hepatitis B vaccine?

There can be side effects from the hepatitis B vaccine, but they tend to be mild and go away in a few days. Side effects may include:

- redness, warmth, swelling, bruising, itching, or feeling sore where you had the needle
- a small lump where you had the needle
- feeling tired or getting upset easily
- a headache
- a fever
- not feeling hungry or not wanting to eat (poor appetite)
- feeling sick to your stomach (nausea), vomiting (throwing up), stomach pain, or loose stool (diarrhea)
- a sore throat, cough, runny nose

It is important to stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after your vaccine. Some people may have a rare but serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. If anaphylaxis happens, you will get medicine to treat the symptoms.

It is rare to have a serious side effect after a vaccine. Call Health Link at 811 to report any serious or unusual side effects.

## How can I manage side effects?

- To help with soreness and swelling, put a cool, wet cloth over the area where you had the needle.
- There is medicine to help with a fever or pain. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure what medicine or dose to take. Follow the directions on the package.

- Children under the age of 18 years should **not** take aspirin because it can cause serious health problems.
- Some people with health problems, such as a weak immune system, must call their doctor if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your doctor even if you think the fever is from the vaccine.

## Who should not get the hepatitis B vaccine?

You may not be able to get this vaccine if you:

- have an allergy to any part of the vaccine
- had a severe (serious) or unusual side effect after this vaccine or one like it

You can still get the vaccine if you have a mild illness, such as a cold or fever. Always tell your healthcare provider if you have allergies or if you have had a side effect from a vaccine in the past.

Check with your doctor or a public health nurse before you get the vaccine.

## For More Information



Call Health Link at **811**



Go to **ImmunizeAlberta.ca**



Go to **MyHealth.Alberta.ca**

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# Facts about hepatitis B

## What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is an infection in the liver that is caused by a virus. Symptoms include poor appetite, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, and yellow skin and eyes (jaundice). Some people do not have any symptoms.

One out of 10 adults who are infected with hepatitis B have an infection that does not go away (called a chronic infection).

- The younger you are, the higher the chance of having a chronic infection. For example, more than 9 out of 10 babies who are infected with hepatitis B will have a chronic infection.
- If you have a chronic hepatitis B infection, you have it forever. You can spread it to others, even if you do not look or feel sick.
- A chronic hepatitis B infection can lead to liver damage (cirrhosis), liver cancer, and death.

Around the world each year, 500,000 to 1.2 million people die from hepatitis B-related disease.

## 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.

You have the highest risk if:

- the person who gave birth to you had hepatitis B when you were born
- you live with someone who has a chronic hepatitis B infection
- you are on dialysis
- you live in or travel to countries with high rates of hepatitis B infection
- you have a lifestyle that puts you at risk of the infection (such as having unprotected sex or sharing needles)

## How does it spread?

Hepatitis B spreads through:

- childbirth (if the person giving birth is infected)
- sharing needles, razors, nail clippers, or toothbrushes
- contact with equipment that is not cleaned properly (such as needles used for tattoos, body piercings, or acupuncture)
- sex
- human bites or open sores