

# HEPATITIS B VACCINE

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### 1 Why get vaccinated?

#### Hepatitis B is a serious disease.

The hepatitis B virus (HBV) can cause short-term (acute) illness that leads to:

- loss of appetite
- diarrhea and vomiting
- tiredness
- jaundice (yellow skin or eyes)
- pain in muscles, joints, and stomach

It can also cause long-term (chronic) illness that leads to:

- liver damage (cirrhosis)
- liver cancer
- death

About 1.25 million people in the U.S. have chronic HBV infection.

Each year it is estimated that:

- 80,000 people, mostly young adults, get infected with HBV
- More than 11,000 people have to stay in the hospital because of hepatitis B
- 4,000 to 5,000 people die from chronic hepatitis B

**Hepatitis B vaccine can prevent hepatitis B.** It is the first anti-cancer vaccine because it can prevent a form of liver cancer.

### 2 How is hepatitis B virus spread?

Hepatitis B virus is spread through contact with the blood and body fluids of an infected person. A person can get infected in several ways, such as:

- by having unprotected sex with an infected person
- by sharing needles when injecting illegal drugs
- by being stuck with a used needle on the job
- during birth when the virus passes from an infected mother to her baby

About 1/3 of people who are infected with hepatitis B in the United States don't know how they got it.

### 3 Who should get hepatitis B vaccine and when?

- 1) Everyone 18 years of age and younger
- 2) Adults over 18 who are at risk

Adults at risk for HBV infection include:

- people who have more than one sex partner in 6 months
- men who have sex with other men
- sex contacts of infected people
- people who inject illegal drugs
- health care and public safety workers who might be exposed to infected blood or body fluids
- household contacts of persons with chronic HBV infection
- hemodialysis patients

If you are not sure whether you are at risk, ask your doctor or nurse.

✓ **People should get 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine according to the following schedule.** *If you miss a dose or get behind schedule, get the next dose as soon as you can. There is no need to start over.*

Hepatitis B Vaccination Schedule		WHO?		
		Infant whose mother is infected with HBV	Infant whose mother is <i>not</i> infected with HBV	Older child, adolescent, or adult
WHEN?	First Dose	Within 12 hours of birth	Birth - 2 months of age	Any time
	Second Dose	1 - 2 months of age	1 - 4 months of age (at least 1 month after first dose)	1 - 2 months after first dose
	Third Dose	6 months of age	6 - 18 months of age	4 - 6 months after first dose

- The second dose must be given at least 1 month after the first dose.
- The third dose must be given at least 2 months after the second dose and at least 4 months after the first.
- The third dose should *not* be given to infants under 6 months of age, because this could reduce long-term protection.

Adolescents 11 to 15 years of age may need only two doses of hepatitis B vaccine, separated by 4-6 months. Ask your health care provider for details.

Hepatitis B vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

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### Some people should not get hepatitis B vaccine or should wait

People should not get hepatitis B vaccine if they have ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to **baker's yeast** (the kind used for making bread) or to a **previous dose of hepatitis B vaccine**.

People who are moderately or severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled should usually wait until they recover before getting hepatitis B vaccine.

Ask your doctor or nurse for more information.



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### What are the risks from hepatitis B vaccine?

A vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of hepatitis B vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

Getting hepatitis B vaccine is much safer than getting hepatitis B disease.

Most people who get hepatitis B vaccine do not have any problems with it.

#### Mild problems

- soreness where the shot was given, lasting a day or two (up to 1 out of 11 children and adolescents, and about 1 out of 4 adults)
- mild to moderate fever (up to 1 out of 14 children and adolescents and 1 out of 100 adults)

#### Severe problems

- serious allergic reaction (very rare)

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### What if there is a moderate or severe reaction?

#### What should I look for?

Any unusual condition, such as a serious allergic reaction, high fever or unusual behavior. Serious allergic

reactions are extremely rare with any vaccine. If one were to occur, it would be within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot. Signs can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heart beat or dizziness.

#### What should I do?

- **Call** a doctor, or get the person to a doctor right away.
- **Tell** your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- **Ask** your doctor, nurse, or health department to report the reaction by filing a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form.

Or you can file this report through the VAERS web site at [www.vaers.org](http://www.vaers.org), or by calling 1-800-822-7967.

*VAERS does not provide medical advice*

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### The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program

In the rare event that you or your child has a serious reaction to a vaccine, a federal program has been created to help you pay for the care of those who have been harmed.

For details about the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, call **1-800-338-2382** or visit the program's website at [www.hrsa.gov/osp/vicp](http://www.hrsa.gov/osp/vicp)

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### How can I learn more?

- Ask your doctor or nurse. They can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Call your local or state health department's immunization program.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
  - Call **1-800-232-4636** (1-800-CDC-INFO) or **1-888-443-7232**
  - Visit the National Immunization Program's website at [www.cdc.gov/nip](http://www.cdc.gov/nip) or CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis website at [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis)



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Immunization Program