



Hepatitis B Vaccine

**Keep your child safe.
Get all shots on time.**

By getting all shots on time, your child can be protected from many diseases over a lifetime.

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

What is hepatitis B vaccine?

Hepatitis B vaccine protects against the hepatitis B virus. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada.

Who should get the vaccine?

Hepatitis B vaccine is provided free as part of your child's routine immunizations. The vaccine is given in Grade 6 as 2 doses or shots at 4 to 6 months apart.

The hepatitis B vaccine is also provided free to babies as part of their routine immunizations. See HealthLink BC File [#25c Hepatitis B Infant Vaccine](#) for more information.

The vaccine is also provided free to children and adults at high risk of hepatitis B infection, including:

- Children under 12 years of age whose families have emigrated from areas with high rates of hepatitis B.
- Household contacts of internationally adopted children.
- Household and sexual contacts of someone with hepatitis B.
- Males who have sexual contact with other males.

- Those with many sexual partners or a recent sexually transmitted infection.
- Illicit drug users and their sexual partners.
- Those with chronic liver disease, hepatitis C, or a liver transplant.
- Those with chronic kidney disease including predialysis, hemodialysis, or peritoneal dialysis patients.
- Those who have received a kidney or stem cell transplant.
- Those who have hemophilia or receive repeated infusions of blood or blood products.
- Those who are HIV positive.
- Inmates of a correctional facility.
- Teachers, staff and students in a childcare setting attended by a child with hepatitis B whose behaviour or medical condition increases the chances of exposure to that child's blood or body fluids.
- Staff or residents in a community group home for the developmentally challenged.
- Students training in a health care profession, health care workers, pharmacists and others who may have contact with blood and body fluids in their jobs.

Adults and those 16 years of age and older require 3 doses of the vaccine.

If you are not eligible for a free vaccine, speak with your health care provider, (doctor, nurse, pharmacist), about buying the vaccine. It is important to keep a record of all immunizations received.

Benefits of the Vaccine

The hepatitis B vaccine is highly effective. It protects against hepatitis B infection and its complications such as permanent liver damage,

which can lead to liver cancer and death. When you get vaccinated, you help protect others as well.

Possible Reactions after the Vaccine

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get hepatitis B.

Common reactions to the vaccine may include soreness, redness and swelling where the shot was given. Some may experience a mild fever.

Acetaminophen or Tylenol® can be given for fever or soreness. ASA or Aspirin® should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number. This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in a million people who get the vaccine.

Report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Who should not get the vaccine?

Speak with your health care provider if you have had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of hepatitis B vaccine, or any component of the vaccine such as yeast, or to latex.

What is hepatitis B infection?

Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks the liver. It can cause serious disease including permanent liver damage (cirrhosis). Hepatitis B is also the main cause of liver cancer, which can be fatal. Hepatitis B virus is spread from one infected person to another by contact with blood or body fluids. This includes an accidental or intentional poke with a used needle, intimate sexual contact, being splashed in the mouth, nose, or eyes with infected blood, being bitten by an infected person, or by sharing blood-

contaminated items such as a toothbrush, dental floss or razor. Mothers who are infected with hepatitis B virus can pass the virus to their newborn babies during delivery.

After the virus enters your body, it usually takes 2 to 3 months to develop symptoms or signs of illness. Many people who get hepatitis B show no symptoms and may not know they have the disease. Whether there are signs of illness or not, you can pass the virus on to others.

Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Efforts are first made to seek parental/guardian or representative consent prior to immunization. However, children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations.

For more information on immunizations visit Immunize BC at www.immunizebc.ca

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm or your local public health unit.

Click on www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call 8-1-1 for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.



ImmunizeBC



BC Centre for Disease Control
AN AGENCY OF THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES AUTHORITY