

Hepatitis B Immune Globulin

What is hepatitis B immune globulin?

Hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) provides immediate, short-term protection against hepatitis B infection. HBIG has large amounts of hepatitis B antibodies taken from donated human blood. Antibodies are proteins that a person's immune system makes to fight germs, such as bacteria and viruses like hepatitis B.

HBIG is approved by Health Canada.

Is hepatitis B immune globulin safe?

Yes. HBIG is prepared from donated human blood that has been tested to ensure its safety. All blood donors are screened for exposure to viruses such as HIV and hepatitis. Each blood donation is also tested for the presence of blood-borne viruses prior to being used to make HBIG. A number of chemical and physical steps are included when preparing HBIG to inactivate and remove viruses and bacteria that can cause disease. The final preparation of HBIG undergoes additional testing to ensure that there are no known infectious viruses present. However, there is an extremely small risk that some blood-borne infections could be passed on through the use of HBIG. Since blood screening and testing began, there have been no reports of blood-borne infections such as HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C in people who received HBIG.

Who should get hepatitis B immune globulin?

If you have been exposed to hepatitis B virus and have not received the hepatitis B vaccine in the past, you should get 1 dose of HBIG. HBIG works best if given as soon as possible and within 14 days after exposure to the hepatitis B virus.

HBIG is recommended for the following:

- People exposed to blood known or suspected to be infected with hepatitis B virus by:
 - being poked with a used injection needle;

- being splashed in the mouth, nose or eyes with infected blood;
- being bitten by someone with hepatitis B; or
- having contact with household articles such as a toothbrush, dental floss, or a razor contaminated with blood from an infected person.

- People who have had unprotected sex with a person with hepatitis B.
- Victims of sexual assault.
- Newborns and infants less than 12 months of age whose mothers have hepatitis B.
- Newborns whose mothers are at high risk of infection with hepatitis B, such as injection drug users or sex trade workers.

A dose of hepatitis B vaccine may be given at the same time as HBIG. Two more doses of hepatitis B vaccine may be given later to provide full, long-term protection against infection. Speak with your health care provider about when to get these doses. For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #25a Hepatitis B Vaccine](#).

What are the benefits of hepatitis B immune globulin?

HBIG provides immediate, short-term protection against hepatitis B infection. It can prevent illness or make the illness less severe.

What are the possible reactions after hepatitis B immune globulin?

Common reactions to HBIG may include soreness where the immunization was given. Headache, fever, nausea, sore muscles or joints, diarrhea, or allergic reactions (hives or swelling) may also occur.

Some immune globulins may be associated with a risk of thrombosis (blood clots) within 24 hours of

receiving them, especially when large volumes are given. The risk of thrombosis is increased in those:

- 45 years of age and older;
- with a history of thrombosis; or
- with risk factors for thrombosis.

Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen* (e.g. Advil®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

*Ibuprofen should not be given to children under 6 months of age without first speaking to your health care provider.

For more information on Reye Syndrome, see [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye Syndrome](#).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any immunization because there is a rare possibility, less than 1 in a million, of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. Should this reaction occur, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment includes administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

It is important to always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Who should not get hepatitis B immune globulin?

Speak with your health care provider if you have:

- had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of any immune globulin or any of its components;
- a condition called isolated immunoglobulin A deficiency;
- a history of thrombosis or risk factors for thrombosis; or

- been immunized against measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) or chickenpox within the past 14 days.

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you have concerns speak with your health care provider.

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks the liver. It can cause serious disease including permanent liver damage, also known as cirrhosis. Hepatitis B is also one of the main causes 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. After the virus enters your body, it usually takes 2 to 3 months to develop symptoms or signs of illness.

Symptoms of hepatitis B may include fatigue, fever, nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, dark urine, pale stools and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). 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. 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 mature minor consent see [HealthLinkBC File #119 The Infants Act, Mature Minor Consent and Immunization](#).

For more information on immunizations, visit ImmunizeBC at www.immunizebc.ca.



ImmunizeBC



BC Centre for Disease Control
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

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