

Hepatitis B (HBV) Vaccine

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 these diseases.

What is the hepatitis B vaccine?

The hepatitis B vaccine protects against 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 (feeling sick to your stomach), vomiting (throwing up), and jaundice (yellow skin and eyes). Some people do not have any symptoms.

Up to 1 out of 10 adults who get hepatitis B will develop an infection that does not go away (called a chronic infection). It can lead to liver damage (cirrhosis), liver cancer, and death.

The younger you are when you get hepatitis B, the higher the chance of having a chronic infection. For example, more than 9 out of 10 babies with hepatitis B will have a chronic infection.

When you have a chronic infection you can spread hepatitis B to others, even if you do not look or feel sick.

Around the world each year, 600,000 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 by having contact with the blood and body fluids of a person who has the infection. It can spread through:

- childbirth (if the person giving birth has hepatitis B)
- shared 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.

Who should get the hepatitis B vaccine?

In Alberta, children born March 1, 2018 or later get hepatitis B vaccine combined with other vaccines when they are babies, as part of their routine childhood vaccine series. If your child did not get all their doses of hepatitis B as a baby, they can get this vaccine in school, usually in Grade 1.

Children born before March 1, 2018 can get the hepatitis B vaccine as part of the school immunization program in Grade 6.

If you were born in 1981 or later and you did not get the hepatitis B vaccine in school, you can get it 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. Check with your health insurance provider to see if your plan covers the cost.

How many doses do I need?

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

Most other people, including students in Grade 1, need 3 doses, over 6 months.

The number of doses you need also depends on your health. If you have certain health problems, such as kidney problems, or you have had an organ or stem cell transplant, you may need more doses. Ask your healthcare provider how many doses you need.

See reverse for more information.

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. As part of the routine immunization schedule, babies get this vaccine starting at age 2 months.

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?

Eligible students can get the vaccine in school. Parents and guardians will get an information package that includes a consent form. If you want your child to get the vaccine in school, you must complete and sign the consent form and return it according to the instructions provided.

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 your local public health or community health centre.

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 where you had the needle that may look red on lighter skin or purple on darker skin
- warmth, swelling, bruising, itching, or feeling sore where you had the needle
- a small lump where you had the needle
- feeling tired or unwell, or getting upset easily
- a headache
- a fever
- not feeling hungry or not wanting to eat (poor appetite)
- nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, or loose stool (diarrhea)
- a sore throat, cough, runny nose

At least 1 out of 100 people who got this vaccine reported 1 or more of these side effects. In some cases, it is unknown if the vaccine caused these side effects.

It is important to stay 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 healthcare provider if you are not sure what medicine or dose to take. Follow the directions on the package.
- Some people with health problems, such as a weak immune system, must call their healthcare provider if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your healthcare provider even if you think the fever is from the vaccine.

Who may not be able to 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. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any allergies you may have.
- You had a severe (serious) or unusual side effect after this vaccine or one like it.

If any of these apply, check with your healthcare provider or a public health nurse before you get the vaccine.

Although you can get the vaccine if you have a mild illness, such as a cold or fever, you should stay home until you are feeling better to prevent spreading your illness to others.

I have a fear of needles. How can I prepare for my immunization?

Many adults and children are afraid of needles. There are things you can do before, during, and after immunization to be more comfortable.



Scan the QR code, visit ahs.ca/vaccinecomfort, or call Health Link at **811** for information.

For more information about immunization



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Scan the QR code or go to ahs.ca/immunize