



Hepatitis B (Hep-B)

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.

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

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- By being stuck with a used needle on the job
- During birth when the virus passes from an infected mother to her baby

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

Who should get hepatitis B vaccine and when?

- Everyone 21 years of age and younger
- 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.

For an infant whose mother is infected with HBV:

- First Dose: Within 12 hours of birth
- Second Dose: 1 to 2 months of age
- Third Dose: 6 months of age

For an infant whose mother is not infected with HBV:

- First Dose: Birth to 2 months of age
- Second Dose: 1 to 4 months of age (at least 1 month after the first dose)
- Third Dose: 6 to 18 months of age

For an older child, adolescent, or adult:

- First Dose: Any time
- Second Dose: 1 to 2 months after the first dose
- Third Dose: 4 to 6 months after the first dose

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.

What are the risks from hepatitis B vaccine?

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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)

What if there is a moderate or severe reaction?

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.
- Ask us or your self file a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form, or call VAERS yourself at 1-800-822-7967.

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

<http://www.hrsa.gov/osp/vicp>

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