

Vaccine Information Statement

Hepatitis B Vaccine: What You Need to Know

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See www.immunize.org/vis.
Hojas de información sobre vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite www.immunize.org/vis

1. Why get vaccinated?

Hepatitis B is a serious disease that affects the liver. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus. Hepatitis B can cause mild illness lasting a few weeks, or it can lead to a serious, lifelong illness.

Hepatitis B virus infection can be either acute or chronic.

- **Acute hepatitis B virus infection** is a short-term illness that occurs within the first 6 months after someone is exposed to the Hepatitis B virus. This can lead to:
 - fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, and/or vomiting
 - jaundice (yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements)
 - pain in muscles, joints, and stomach
- **Chronic hepatitis B virus infection** is a long-term illness that occurs when the Hepatitis B virus remains in a person's body. Most people who go on to develop chronic hepatitis B don't have symptoms, but it is still very serious, and can lead to:
 - liver damage (cirrhosis)
 - liver cancer
 - death

Chronically-infected people can spread hepatitis B virus to others, even if they don't feel or look sick themselves. Up to 1.4 million people in the United States may have chronic hepatitis B infection.

Hepatitis B is spread when blood, semen, or other body fluid infected with the Hepatitis B virus enters the body of a person who is not infected. People can become infected with the virus through:

- Birth (a baby whose mother is infected can be infected at birth)
- Sex with an infected partner
- Sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment
- Sharing items such as razors or toothbrushes with an infected person
- Direct contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person
- Exposure to blood from needlesticks or other sharp instruments

Hepatitis B is especially serious for infants. If an infant gets hepatitis B, it becomes chronic in about 90% of cases, with about a 25% chance of premature death.

Each year about 2,000 people in the United States die from hepatitis B-related liver disease.

Hepatitis B vaccine can prevent hepatitis B and its consequences, including liver cancer and cirrhosis.

2. Hepatitis B vaccine

Hepatitis B vaccine is made from parts of the hepatitis B virus. It cannot cause hepatitis B infection. The vaccine is usually given as 3 or 4 shots over a 6-month period.

All **infants** should get their first dose of Hepatitis B vaccine at birth and complete the vaccine series by 6–18 months of age.

All **children and adolescents** younger than 19 years of age who have not yet gotten the vaccine should also be vaccinated.

Hepatitis B vaccination is recommended for **adults** who are at risk for hepatitis B virus infection, including:

- People whose sex partners have hepatitis B
- Sexually active persons who are not in a long-term monogamous relationship
- Persons seeking evaluation or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease
- Men who have sexual contact with other men
- People who share needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment
- People who have household contact with someone infected with the hepatitis B virus
- Health care and public safety workers at risk for exposure to blood or body fluids
- Residents and staff of facilities for developmentally disabled persons
- Travelers to regions with increased rates of hepatitis B
- People with chronic liver disease, kidney disease, HIV infection, or diabetes
- Anyone who wants to be protected from hepatitis B

You can get hepatitis B vaccine at the same time as other vaccines.

3. Some people should not this vaccine.

Tell the person who is giving the vaccine:

- **If the person getting the vaccine has any severe, life-threatening allergies.**
If you ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of hepatitis B vaccine, or have a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine or are allergic to yeast, you may be advised not to get vaccinated.
- **If the person getting the vaccine is not feeling well.**
It is usually okay to get hepatitis B vaccine when you have a mild illness, but you might be asked to come back when you feel better.

4. Risks of a vaccine reaction

With any medicine, including vaccines, there is a chance of reactions. These are usually mild and go away on their own, but serious reactions are also possible.

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

Minor problems following hepatitis B vaccine include:

- soreness where the shot was given
- temperature of 99.9°F or higher

If these problems occur, they usually begin soon after the shot and last 1 or 2 days.

Problems that could happen after any injected vaccine:

- People sometimes faint after a medical procedure, including vaccination. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent fainting and injuries caused by a fall. Tell your doctor if you feel dizzy, or have vision changes or ringing in the ears.
- Some people get severe pain in the shoulder and have difficulty moving the arm where a shot was given. This happens very rarely.
- Any medication can cause a severe allergic reaction. Such reactions from a vaccine are very rare, estimated at about 1 in a million doses, and would happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a serious injury or death.

The safety of vaccines is always being monitored. For more information, visit:

www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/

5. What if there is a serious problem?

What should I look for?

- Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or unusual behavior.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness – usually within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

What should I do?

- If you think it is a severe allergic reaction or other emergency that can't wait, call 9-1-1 and get the person to the nearest hospital. Otherwise, call your doctor.

- Reactions should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Your doctor should file this report, or you can do it yourself through the VAERS web site at www.vaers.hhs.gov, or by calling **1-800-822-7967**.

VAERS does not give medical advice.

6. The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program

The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP) is a federal program that was created to compensate people who may have been injured by certain vaccines.

Persons who believe they may have been injured by a vaccine can learn about the program and about filing a claim by calling **1-800-338-2382** or visiting the VICP website at www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation. There is a time limit to file a claim for compensation.

7. How can I learn more?

- Ask your healthcare provider. He or she can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)** or
 - Visit CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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