

Hepatitis B Vaccine

(RecombivaxHB®, Engerix®-B)

Fact Sheet

What is hepatitis B?

- Hepatitis B is a highly contagious virus that attacks the liver. It interferes with the liver's ability to digest food and help to remove waste products from your body.

How does hepatitis B spread?

- Hepatitis B spreads when the blood or body fluids (semen, saliva, vaginal fluids, breast milk) from an infected person pass into the body of someone else, via unprotected sexual activity, blood transfusions, improperly cleaned equipment / needles in medical settings, spas, or tattoo parlours.
- The virus can live on surfaces for several days, so it can also spread through shared needles, razors, toothbrushes or unclean piercing or tattooing equipment.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis B?

- The symptoms of hepatitis B may take months to appear.
- Some people do not even know that they have hepatitis B while others may have symptoms that include loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, and jaundice, which is a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes.

Is there a cure for hepatitis B?

- There is no medication to treat or cure the hepatitis B virus, so the symptoms are treated.
- Most people recover from hepatitis B, but some become chronic carriers of the virus.

What are the benefits of hepatitis B vaccine?

- The hepatitis B vaccine helps to protect children and adults against liver infections caused by the hepatitis B virus.
- Hepatitis B vaccine is over 95% effective in preventing hepatitis B virus infection after completion of the series.
- Children between the ages of 5 and 15 years of age who receive the hepatitis B vaccine series have an even stronger immune response to the vaccine than adults who complete the series.

Who should get the Hepatitis B vaccine?

Publicly funded (free)

- Students in grades 7 to 12 in Ontario are offered a two-dose series of hepatitis B vaccine, with the second dose 4 to 6 months after the first dose. This is a voluntary program.
- Individuals of all ages who are at high risk of becoming infected with hepatitis B:
 - infants born to infected mothers (3 to 4 doses)
 - children under 7 years of age from communities / countries with high rate of hepatitis B (3 doses)
 - household or sexual contacts of infected individuals (3 doses)
 - intravenous drug use (3 doses)
 - history of sexually transmitted disease (3 doses)
 - multiple sex partners, men who have sex with men (3 doses)
 - needlestick injuries in a non-health care setting (3 doses)
 - chronic liver disease including hepatitis C (3 doses)
 - renal dialysis or frequent blood / blood product transfusions
 - awaiting liver transplant (2nd or 3rd doses only)

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Who should not get the hepatitis B vaccine?

- Anyone with a high fever or moderate to severe illness should wait until they feel well.
- Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction to this vaccine in the past, or to any component of the vaccine.
 - **RecombivaxHB®** - hepatitis B surface antigen, amorphous aluminum hydroxyphosphate, sodium borate, sodium chloride, formaldehyde, less than 1% **yeast** protein- **Latex present in preloaded syringes and vial stopper** but unless previous anaphylactic reaction to latex, a single dose may be withdrawn and needle replaced prior to injection
 - **Engerix®-B** - hepatitis B surface antigen, aluminum hydroxide, **yeast** **Latex present in preloaded syringes only.** (Multi-dose form has a trace amount of thimerosal.)
 - **Engerix®-B Pediatric** – half the dose, same components as above

What are the common side effects of the hepatitis B vaccine?

- Some people may feel sore and swollen for a few days where the needle was given, have a slight fever or feel tired for a day or two.
- Tylenol® or ibuprofen may be taken afterwards, as directed, to reduce discomfort or fever.
- **Children under 19 years of age must not be given ASA, Aspirin® or salicylates.**

What else do I need to know?

- The **RecombivaxHB®** dosing schedule involves a booster at 1 & 6 months (with the exception of infants of hepatitis B virus-negative mothers, or children 11 to 15 years of age, who need just one booster at 4 to 6 months).
- If **Engerix®** vaccine has been used, the nurse will discuss the schedule with you.
- Vaccination of pregnant or breastfeeding women should be considered, when indicated, for the protection of mother and infant.
- When you complete the two or three dose series, protection from hep B may be lifelong.

When should I seek medical attention after immunization?

- If you or your child experiences any unusual side effects, seek medical attention & notify us.
- Go to Emergency at a hospital right away or call 911 if you or your child has any of the following after immunization:
 - swelling of the face and neck; problems breathing; hives and itchy, reddened skin

Your Record of Protection

After you receive any immunization, make sure your health care provider updates your personal immunization record. Keep it in a safe place. Please inform us of any immunizations not received from public health.

Other questions? Talk to your health care provider or call our Immunization Program at 613-966-5500 Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

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