

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. Visita www.immunize.org/vis

1. Why get vaccinated?

Hepatitis B vaccine can prevent **hepatitis B**. Hepatitis B is a liver disease that can cause mild illness lasting a few weeks, or it can lead to a serious, lifelong illness.

- **Acute hepatitis B** is a short-term illness that can lead to fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, jaundice (yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements), and pain in the muscles, joints, and stomach.
- **Chronic hepatitis B** 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 do not have symptoms, but it is still very serious and can lead to liver damage (cirrhosis), liver cancer, and death. Chronically infected people can spread hepatitis B virus to others, even if they do not feel or look sick themselves.

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 through:

- Birth (if a pregnant person has hepatitis B, their baby can become infected)
- Sharing items such as razors or toothbrushes with an infected person
- Contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person
- Sex with an infected partner
- Sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment
- Exposure to blood from needlesticks or other sharp instruments

Most people who are vaccinated with hepatitis B vaccine are immune for life.

2. Hepatitis B vaccine

Hepatitis B vaccine is usually given as 2, 3, or 4 shots.

Infants should get their first dose of hepatitis B vaccine at birth and will usually complete the series at 6–18 months of age. **The birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine is an important part of preventing long-term illness in infants and the spread of hepatitis B in the United States.**

Anyone **59 years of age or younger** who has not yet gotten the vaccine should be vaccinated.

Hepatitis B vaccination is recommended for **adults 60 years or older** at increased risk of exposure to hepatitis B who were not vaccinated previously. **Adults 60 years or older** who are not at increased risk and were not vaccinated in the past may also be vaccinated.

Hepatitis B vaccine may be given as a stand-alone vaccine, or as part of a combination vaccine (a type of vaccine that combines more than one vaccine together into one shot).

Hepatitis B vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

3. Talk with your health care provider

Tell your vaccination provider if the person getting the vaccine:

- Has had an **allergic reaction after a previous dose of hepatitis B vaccine**, or has any **severe, life-threatening allergies**



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