

## 6. What if there is a moderate or severe reaction?

- Any unusual condition, such as a high fever or behavior changes. Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heartbeat, or dizziness.

### What should I do?

- **Call** a doctor or get the person to a doctor right away.
- **Tell** your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- **Ask** your doctor, nurse, or health department to report the reaction by filing a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form. Or you can file this report through the VAERS web site at [www.vaers.hhs.gov](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov), or by calling 1-800-822-7967.

*VAERS does not provide medical advice.*

## 7. 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>

## 8. How can I learn more?

- Ask your doctor or nurse. They 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)
  - Visit CDC web sites at:  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis)  
[www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)  
[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

# VACCINES

## What You Need to Know



## Hepatitis B Vaccine

Information provided through  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Immunization Program

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

# Hepatitis B Vaccine

## 1. What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a serious disease that affects the liver. It is caused by hepatitis B virus (HBV) and can cause:

**Acute short-term illness**, which can lead to:

- loss of appetite
- diarrhea & vomiting
- tiredness
- jaundice (yellow skin or eyes)
- pain in muscles, joints, and stomach

Acute illness is more common among adults. Children who become infected usually do not have acute illness.

**Chronic (long-term) infection.** Some people go on to develop chronic HBV infection which can be very serious and often leads to:

- liver damage (cirrhosis)
- liver cancer
- death

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In 2005, about 51,000 people became infected with hepatitis B.

About 1.25 million people in the U.S. have chronic HBV infection.

Each year about 3,000 to 5,000 people die from cirrhosis or liver cancer caused by HBV.

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Hepatitis B is spread through contact with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person. A person can get infected by:

- contact with a mother's blood and body fluids at the time of birth;
- Contact with blood and body fluids through breaks in the skin such as bites, cuts, sores;
- Contact with objects that could have blood or body fluids on them such as toothbrushes or razors;
- Having unprotected sex with an infected person;
- Sharing needles when injecting drugs;
- Being stuck with a used needle on the job.

## 2. Why get vaccinated?

**Hepatitis B vaccine can prevent hepatitis B** and the serious consequences of HBV infection, including liver cancer and cirrhosis.

While Hepatitis B vaccine is made from a part of the hepatitis B virus, it cannot cause HBV infection.

Hepatitis B vaccine is usually given as **a series of 3 or 4 shots**. The series gives long-term protection from HBV infection, possibly lifelong.

## 3. Who should get hepatitis B vaccine and when?

- Everyone 18 years of age and younger
- Adults over 18 who are at risk
- Adults at risk for HBV infection include:
  - Sex partners of people infected with HBV,
  - Men who have sex with men,
  - People who inject street drugs.
- People with more than one sex partner,
- People with chronic liver or kidneys disease,
- People with jobs that expose them to human blood,
- Household contacts of people infected with HBV,
- Kidney dialysis patients,
- People who travel to countries where hepatitis B is common,
- People with HIV infection
- Anyone else who wants to be protected from HBV infection may be vaccinated.

## 4. Who should NOT get the hepatitis B vaccine?

- Anyone with a life-threatening allergy to **baker's yeast** or to **any other component of the vaccine** should not get hepatitis B vaccine. Tell your provider if you have any severe allergies.
- Anyone who has had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a **previous dose of hepatitis B vaccine** should not get another dose.
- Anyone who is **moderately or severely ill** when a dose of the vaccine is scheduled should probably wait until they recover before getting the vaccine.

Your provider can give you more information about these precautions.

Pregnant women who need protection from HBV infection may be vaccinated.

## 5. Hepatitis B vaccine risks

Hepatitis B is a very safe vaccine. Most people do not have any problems with it.

The following **mild problems** have been reported:

- Soreness where the shot was given (up to about 1 person in 4).
- Temperature of 99.9°F or higher (up to about 1 person in 15).

**Severe problems** are extremely rare. Severe allergic reactions are believed to occur about once in 1.1 million doses.

A vaccine, like any medicine, **could** cause a serious reaction. But the risk of a vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small. More than 100 million people have gotten hepatitis B vaccine in the United States.