

Hepatitis B Vaccine

Addressing Common Questions about Hepatitis B Vaccination for Adults

What disease does this vaccine protect against?

Hepatitis B vaccine can protect against hepatitis B virus, and the serious consequences of hepatitis B infection, including liver cancer, liver damage, and liver failure.

How common is this disease?

In the United States, an estimated 800,000 to 1.4 million persons have chronic (long-term) hepatitis B virus infection. In 2011, there were an estimated 18,000 new hepatitis B virus infections in the United States. Many people don't know they are infected or may not have symptoms and therefore never seek medical treatment.

How is this disease spread?

Hepatitis B virus is easily spread through contact with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person. People can also be infected from contact with an object contaminated with hepatitis B virus. The virus can live at least 7 days outside of the body. People who are chronically infected can spread hepatitis B virus to others.

Who is at risk for this disease?

Although anyone can get hepatitis B infection, some adults are at greater risk. Adults are at increased risk of becoming infected with hepatitis B if they are:

- Sex partners of people infected with hepatitis B
- Sexually active persons with more than one sex partner
- Men who have sex with men
- Injection drug users
- Living with persons with chronic hepatitis B infection
- Healthcare and public safety workers at risk for occupational exposure to blood or blood-contaminated body fluids
- Hemodialysis patients
- Residents and staff of facilities for developmentally disabled persons
- Travelers to countries where hepatitis B is common

What could happen if I get this disease?

Hepatitis B can cause acute (short-term) illness that can lead to loss of appetite, tiredness, pain in muscles, joints, and stomach, jaundice, diarrhea, and vomiting.

- Some people, mostly infants and young children, go on to develop chronic hepatitis B infection once they are infected.
- While most of the people infected do not have symptoms, the infection is still very serious, and can lead to liver damage (cirrhosis), liver cancer, and even death.

For more information on this and other vaccines for adults, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults.

**DON'T WAIT.
VACCINATE!**



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

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Who should get this vaccine?

When and how often is this vaccine needed?

All unvaccinated adults at risk for hepatitis B infection should be vaccinated.

This includes:

- People with chronic liver or kidney disease and kidney dialysis patients
- People with diabetes under age 60 (Talk with your doctor if you are over 60 years old)
- People with HIV infection
- People with jobs that expose them to human blood or other body fluids
- Household contacts and sex partners of people infected with hepatitis B
- Residents and staff in institutions for the developmentally disabled
- People who travel to countries where hepatitis B is common
- Men who have sex with men
- People who inject street drugs
- People with more than one sex partner

Anyone else who wants to be protected from hepatitis B infection may also get the vaccine.

Adults getting hepatitis B vaccine typically get 3 doses — with the second dose given 4 weeks after the first and the third dose 5 months after the second. It is important to get all doses for best protection against hepatitis B infection.

Who should not get this vaccine?

People who have had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of hepatitis B vaccine OR those with a life-threatening allergy to yeast, or to any other component of the vaccine, should not get hepatitis B vaccine.

How well does the vaccine work?

The rate of new hepatitis B infections has declined by approximately 82% since 1991 when vaccination against the disease began. The amount of protection you receive from hepatitis B vaccine depends on your age and health condition, but adults are expected to maintain long-term, possibly lifelong, immunity after vaccination with three doses. Getting vaccinated gives you the best protection possible against the disease.

How safe is this vaccine?

Hepatitis B vaccine is very safe. It went through years of testing before being licensed by the FDA in 1991 and continues to be monitored for safety by the FDA and CDC. More than 100 million people in the United States have been vaccinated with hepatitis B vaccine.

Is it safe to get if I have certain health conditions or am taking prescription meds?

Unless you have had an allergic reaction in the past to this vaccine or have allergies to certain components of the vaccine, it is safe to get. It is safe for people taking prescription medications to get vaccines.

What are the potential side effects of this vaccine?

In some cases, hepatitis B vaccine causes mild reactions that last up to a few days, such as soreness where the shot was given and fever. Severe problems are extremely rare. Severe allergic reactions are believed to occur about once in 1.1 million doses.

Where can I get the vaccine?

Hepatitis B vaccine may be available at private doctor offices, public and travel health clinics, pharmacies, or other community locations (such as schools/universities). Check with your doctor or pharmacist or use the [Adult Vaccine Finder \(vaccine.healthmap.org\)](http://vaccine.healthmap.org) to help find places that provide hepatitis B vaccine near you.

How much do the vaccine cost?

Most private health insurance covers recommended adult vaccines, including hepatitis B vaccine. Check with your insurance provider for details on whether there is any cost to you and for a list of in-network vaccine providers.