



Hepatitis B (HB) Vaccine

Vaccines are the best way to protect against some very serious infections. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization strongly recommends routine immunizations.

Hepatitis B can be prevented with a series of Hepatitis B vaccine.

The Virus

The Hepatitis B virus can permanently damage your liver. It's the biggest cause of liver cancer worldwide. You need your liver to digest food and remove waste from your body.

There are around 300 cases of Hepatitis B reported in Ontario each year. People with the disease often become tired, feverish, lose their appetite, and sometimes get yellow skin and eyes (called jaundice). There may be many more people with Hepatitis B. You can get it and not even know it. That means you can infect someone else without knowing.

You can get Hepatitis B through the blood and other body fluids from an infected person. It's primarily a sexually transmitted disease, but you can also pick it up through used needles, and through body/ear piercing or tattooing with dirty equipment. An infected mother can pass it to her child at birth. You can't get Hepatitis B from someone coughing or from hugging or using the same dishes.

There is no cure for Hepatitis B. Most people get well, but about 10 per cent will carry the virus for life and keep infecting other people. Some people will continue to have liver problems for the rest of their lives.

When should this vaccine be given?

Hepatitis B can be given from birth. It is given in a series of 3 shots over a period of 6 months (0, 1 and 6 months).

For Grade 7 Hepatitis B School Program age 11 to 15 years use the two dose schedule – an initial dose and 2nd dose – 4 to 6 months after initial dose. However, those who began the three dose series should continue with the three dose schedule.

How well will this vaccine protect?

In healthy adults the vaccine usually produces over 95% protection.

Possible Side Effects

The vaccine is safe. It's been used in Canada for many years and it's one of the safest vaccines around. The most common reaction to immunization is redness, tenderness and swelling where the shot was given. Fever, nausea, dizziness and headache can also occur. Difficulty breathing has been reported very rarely. Allergic reactions like hives, wheezing, or swelling of the face and mouth are very rare. You should always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your doctor or health care professional.

Always report any serious reactions to your doctor.

Go to a hospital emergency room if you have any of the following symptoms – a bad allergic reaction such as itchy hives, swelling of the lips, face, tongue, legs/arms, difficulty breathing.

Who should get this vaccine?

Hepatitis B is offered to all grade 7 students in Ontario and to certain high risk groups. Some travel destinations recommend immunization.

Who should not get this vaccine?

The risk from Hepatitis B is much greater than the risk from the vaccine; however, some people should not have this vaccine.

You won't be vaccinated if you have a fever, if pregnancy is suspected or anything more serious than a minor cold. Tell your doctor if you've had a past allergic reaction to a vaccine. You should always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your doctor.

Who should I talk to if I have any questions?

Algoma Public Health, Infectious Diseases – Immunization phone line (705) 759-5409
www.algomapublichealth.com or your health care provider.

Your record of protection.

After any immunization is received, a record or yellow card should be updated. Keep your records in a safe place. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide immunization records for all school children to the local public health unit. Don't forget to update the health unit when/if you or your child gets another immunization.