

Hepatitis B Vaccine: What Parents Need to Know

Currently about 1 out of 20 people in the United States have been infected with the HBV infection. More than 1 million of them are living with lifelong hepatitis B virus (HBV). Anyone can get infected with HBV, including your child. Every year, about 3,000 Americans die from liver failure or liver cancer caused by hepatitis B. The hepatitis B vaccine is the best way to protect your child from becoming infected.

What is hepatitis B and why is the vaccine needed?

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). HBV can cause lifelong HBV infection and can lead to liver cancer or permanent scarring of the liver (cirrhosis). Hepatitis B vaccine can **PREVENT** hepatitis B.

How is hepatitis B virus spread?

Hepatitis B virus is spread when blood or other bodily fluids infected with hepatitis B virus enters the body of a person who is not infected. The virus can enter the bloodstream, attack the liver, and cause serious damage. People can become infected through:

- Birth (if the mother has HBV)
- Sharing personal items, such as razors or toothbrushes, with a person who is infected
- Contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person
- Having unprotected sex with a person who is infected
- Exposure to blood from needlesticks or other sharp instruments
- Living in the same household as a person with a lifelong form of the infection

HBV Facts

- One-third of people who are infected with HBV in the U.S. don't know how they got it.
- Most people, especially children, have no symptoms, do not feel sick, and don't know they are infected. As a result, the virus is spread without knowing it.
- Nearly half of the recorded infections occur during childhood.
- A baby who gets infected with the hepatitis B virus during the first five years of life has a 15% to 25% risk for premature death from liver disease, including liver failure or liver cancer.
- Babies are not able to fight off hepatitis B as well as adults. About 9 out of 10 babies who get infected in the first year of life will stay infected for life.

Is there a cure for hepatitis B?

- No. Although there are several medications to help people who are infected, there are no medications that “cure” it. The good news is that hepatitis B can be prevented by vaccination.

Who recommends it and when is it recommended?

- The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that every baby get the hepatitis B vaccine within the first 24 hours of birth.
- Experts recommend vaccination against hepatitis B as a routine part of a newborn's hospital care.

Hepatitis B vaccine

- Infants should get their first dose of hepatitis B vaccine in the hospital within 24 hours of birth. The second dose 1-2 months later, and the third dose at age 6 months or later.
- 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.
- Hepatitis B vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Is the hepatitis B vaccine safe?

- The vaccine is very safe. No serious reactions have been linked to this vaccine with more than one billion hepatitis B vaccines given worldwide.
- Side effects are usually mild and include fussiness or soreness at the injection site. Symptoms usually go away within 48 to 72 hours.

How can I learn more?

- Speak to your pediatrician if you have any concerns or questions regarding the recommended vaccines.

Please visit these additional sites for more information:

Visit: links.wellstar.org/vaccine-hepb



Visit: links.wellstar.org/hepb-cdc

