

Hepatitis B Vaccine

FACT SHEET

What is hepatitis B?

- Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by a virus.
- This virus can permanently damage your liver and is a leading cause of liver cancer.
- There is no cure for hepatitis B, only treatment to stop the progression of the disease.
- Some people will carry the virus for life without becoming sick themselves but they can still pass the virus on to others.

How do you catch hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is spread by:

- Contact with blood or other body fluids of an infected person,
- Body/ear piercing and tattooing with dirty equipment,
- Sharing used needles, razors or other contaminated items,
- Having unprotected sex with an infected person,
- An infected mother can also pass the virus on to her child at birth.

Hepatitis B shot

- The hepatitis B shot will prevent you from being infected should you come into contact with someone with hepatitis B.
- The hepatitis B shot is given in the arm. It is given as a series of three shots. The first shot is given, the second shot one month later and the third shot six months from the first.

You should not get the hepatitis B shot if you:

- Have an allergy to any ingredients of the vaccine (yeast, aluminum, thimerosal),
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding.

What to expect after the shot

- Some individuals may get pain, swelling, itchiness and/or redness where the shot was given. It is common to have a fever, nausea, dizziness, headache or feel tired after a shot.
- More serious side effects are rare and should be reported to your health care provider right away. Symptoms may include: trouble breathing, swelling of the face or mouth, a fever higher than 39 °C, hives or a rash.