

Hepatitis B, Hep B Vaccines & You

3 Things You Should Know

- 1 Hepatitis B is **spread through contact with blood or other body fluids** of an infected person.
- 2 When you work in post-acute and long-term care you may handle residents' blood or other body fluids, which may contain the hepatitis B virus. **This increases the chance of accidental exposure** such as a needlestick injury or a cut.
- 3 Vaccination is highly effective in preventing hepatitis B infection and is **strongly recommended for everyone who works with long-term care residents** and may be exposed to blood or body fluids.

What is Hepatitis B ?

Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease caused by a virus. Acute hepatitis may cause no or mild symptoms, but it can cause severe illness. Chronic (long-lasting) hepatitis may cause liver cirrhosis, liver cancer, or liver failure.

You can get infected if you have contact with the blood, saliva, semen, or vaginal fluids of an infected person.

You are more likely to be exposed to hepatitis B virus because of regular contact with potentially infectious body fluids.

Exposures may result from:

- needle-stick incidents
- assisting with blood glucose measurements
- cuts from sharp instruments
- splashes to mucous membranes such as the eyes or mouth

Hep B Vaccine and You

Vaccination is the best way to prevent hepatitis B infection. Hep B vaccine is recommended for anyone who may be exposed to blood or body fluids at work.

- **Vaccination Series:** Hep B vaccine is given as an injection in the deltoid muscle of the upper arm. There are different schedules depending on the brand of vaccine (2 or 3 doses). You need all the doses to be protected.
- **Previously Vaccinated (for example, as a child):** If your immune system is normal, you don't need hep B vaccine booster shots after the full series. You have long-term (~30 years) protection. *Some immunodeficient persons (like those on hemodialysis) may need periodic booster doses.*
- **Testing to Confirm Immunity:** People working in a healthcare setting may need a blood test after vaccination to confirm that the vaccine induced immunity. Testing is done 1 to 2 months following the final vaccine dose. Testing is needed because of your increased risk of exposure; most other people do not need testing.
- **Pregnancy:** Hep B vaccination is safe during pregnancy. Hep B vaccine has a long history of safe use with no known risk to the developing infant.

Note: Many adults may not have had hep B vaccine as a child. The vaccine was recommended for children beginning in 1991. You are considered immune if you have official written medical records showing:

- You got a full hepatitis B vaccine series **OR**
- Your blood test shows you're protected

Documentation is Important

Keep track of your vaccination dates and blood test results. **Only official written records count; simply remembering you got the vaccine or test isn't enough.** You'll need them for new jobs.

Without official records, you might need extra tests or shots. **Persons without written proof of a completed series are recommended to be vaccinated and then be tested to confirm immunity.** There are no long-term effects to getting extra doses of the hep B vaccine if you do not remember and receive more doses after completing the series.

Most adults don't have their childhood vaccine records, but you can check with sources like your parents or caregiver, current or past doctors, state immunization systems in states you have lived, schools you have attended, and former employers or the military branch in which you served.

When you choose vaccination, you protect yourself and your loved ones.

Learn More

- **OSHA Fact Sheet: Hepatitis B Vaccination Protection,** www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/bbfact05.pdf
- **Hepatitis B and Healthcare Personnel Q&A, Immunize.org,** www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/catg.d/p2109.pdf
- **Viral Hepatitis Exposure Risk Among Health Care Providers, CDC,** www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcp/populations-settings/health-care-providers.html
- **Recommended Adult Immunization Schedule for ages 19 years or older; 2025, CDC,** www.acpjournals.org/doi/suppl/10.7326/ANNALS-25-01576/suppl_file/annals-25-01576-supplement-1.pdf?_gl=1*idy9eb*_gcl_au*NzI0MDI2NDY1LjE3NTc5ODQ2ODI.*_ga*_MTU0MDYyNjQ4NC4xNzU3OTg0Njgy*_ga_PM4F5HBGFQ*cZ3NTc5ODQ2ODEkbzEkZzEkdDE3NTc5ODQ2OTMkajQ4JGwwJGgw&_ga=2.48276902.1485124720.1757984682-1540626484.1757984682