

Hepatitis B Vaccine (RecombivaxHB®, Engerix®-B) Fact Sheet

The Hepatitis B vaccine helps to protect children and adults against liver infections caused by the hepatitis B virus.

What is Hepatitis B?

- Hepatitis B is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus. It interferes with the liver's ability to digest food and help to remove waste products from your body.
- The virus is a worldwide health problem; it is **not** spread through the air, food or water.
- Hepatitis B spreads when the blood or body fluids (semen, saliva, vaginal fluids, breast milk) from an infected person pass into the body of someone else, via sexual intercourse, blood transfusions or needle stick injuries.
- The virus can live on surfaces for several days, so it can also spread through shared needles, razors, toothbrushes or unclean piercing or tattooing equipment.
- Some people do not even know that they have hepatitis B while others may have symptoms that include loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and jaundice, which is a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes.
- Most people recover from hepatitis B, but some become chronic carriers of the virus.
- There is no medication to treat or cure hepatitis B.

Who should get the Hepatitis B vaccine?

Publicly funded (free)

- Grade 7 / 8 students in Ontario are offered a two-dose series of RecombivaxHB®, with the second dose 4 to 6 months after the first dose. This is a voluntary program.
- Individuals of all ages who are at high risk of becoming infected with hepatitis B:
 - infants born to infected mothers
 - children under 7 years of age from communities / countries with high rate of hepatitis B
 - household or sexual contacts of infected individuals
 - illegal injectable drug users
 - multiple sex partners; men who have sex with men
 - needle stick injuries in a non-health care setting
 - chronic liver disease including hepatitis C; awaiting liver transplant
 - renal dialysis or frequent blood / blood product transfusions

Chargeable

- Individuals of all ages who request the hepatitis B vaccine for protection
 - who wish to reduce their risk of hepatitis B
 - for international travel to areas with a high rate of hepatitis B
 - who come from or are living in a country / community with a high rate of hepatitis B
 - health care workers or others with possible occupational exposure to blood, blood products or bodily fluids

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Who should not get the Hepatitis B vaccine?

- Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction to this vaccine in the past, or to any component of the vaccine
 - **RecombivaxHB®** - hepatitis B surface antigen, amorphous aluminum hydroxyphosphate, sodium borate, sodium chloride, formaldehyde, less than 1% **yeast** protein. **Does contain latex** (in the vial stopper).
 - **Engerix®-B** - hepatitis B surface antigen, aluminum hydroxide, **yeast**. **May contain latex**. (Multi-dose form has a trace amount of thimerosal.)
 - **Engerix®-B Pediatric** – half the dose, same components as above
- Anyone with a high fever or moderate to severe illness should wait until they feel well.

What are the common side effects of the Hepatitis B vaccine?

- Some people may feel sore and swollen for a few days where the needle was given, have a slight fever or feel tired for a day or two.
- Tylenol® or ibuprofen may be taken afterwards, as directed, to reduce discomfort or fever.
- **Children under 19 years of age must not be given ASA, Aspirin® or salicylates.**

What else do I need to know?

- The **RecombivaxHB®** dosing schedule involves a booster at 1 & 6 months, (with the exception of infants of hepatitis B virus-negative mothers, or children under 11, who need just one booster at 4 to 6 months).
- If **Engerix®** vaccine has been used, the nurse will discuss the schedule with you.
- Vaccination of pregnant or breastfeeding women should be considered, when indicated, for the protection of mother and infant.
- When you complete the two or three dose series, depending upon the product used, protection from hepatitis B may be lifelong.

When should I seek medical attention after immunization?

- If you or your child experiences any unusual side effects, seek medical attention and notify us.
- Go to Emergency at a hospital right away or call 911 if you or your child has any of the following after immunization:
 - swelling of the face and neck
 - problems breathing
 - hives and itchy, reddened skin

Your Record of Protection

After you receive any immunization, make sure your health care provider updates your personal immunization record. Keep it in a safe place. Please inform us of any immunizations not received from public health.

Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Immunization Program at 613-966-5500
Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

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