

Hepatitis B Vaccine

Protects against the hepatitis B virus.

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that causes serious liver infections and can lead to permanent liver damage, cirrhosis and/or liver cancer. Hepatitis B is the leading cause of liver cancer in Canada.

Hepatitis B is spread through contact with blood and body fluids from an infected individual. It can be spread through sexual activity, needle sharing, using contaminated equipment for tattooing and piercing, and sharing toothbrushes or razor blades. It may also be passed from mother to baby during childbirth.

Why get vaccinated?

Immunization is the best way to protect you and your family against serious diseases. This vaccine is most effective when given before exposure to the disease.

There is no cure for hepatitis B. As well, one out of 10 people who are infected with the virus will carry it for their life. These individuals often do not have symptoms and can spread it to others.

When the vaccine is given in the recommended number of doses, it protects 98 percent of people.

Who is eligible to be vaccinated?

The vaccine is routinely offered to Grade 7 students with eligibility remaining until the end of grade 12. This vaccine is given to students 11 to 15 years of age as a two-dose series, 4-6 months apart. Students 16 years of age and older, starting or completing their vaccine series will need three doses of the vaccine.

Hepatitis B vaccine is also provided free to infants, children and adults at high risk. For more information on eligibility, see Table 3 of the [Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule for Ontario](#).

This vaccine is recommended, but not provided free, for those with occupational risks; those living, travelling or having a medical procedure/care in a country with high levels of hepatitis B; and for anyone wanting to decrease their risk of hepatitis B.

Note: Routine boosters are not recommended if a vaccine series has been completed.

Who should not get the vaccine?

- Anyone with a severe allergic reaction to any part of the vaccine or its container.
- Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction to this vaccine in the past.
- Anyone with a high fever or serious infection worse than a cold.
- Anyone who has completed a hepatitis B or combination vaccine series containing hepatitis B (Twinrix®, Infanrix Hexa®).

If you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) within six weeks of a previous vaccine, please speak to a healthcare provider about getting this vaccine.

What to expect after vaccination?

Hepatitis B vaccine is safe and well tolerated.

Side effects, if they occur, are usually mild and go away in a few days. Common side effects include redness, swelling and/or pain at the injection site.

Headache, fever, tiredness, dizziness, nausea and muscle aches may also occur, but are less common.

Severe allergic reactions (i.e. anaphylaxis), although rare, are a risk with the administration of any vaccine. It is recommended that you remain in a clinic setting for 15 minutes following immunization as this is the most common timeframe when anaphylaxis will occur.

Stay up to date with your vaccinations

Make sure your healthcare provider updates your personal immunization record (yellow card) after you receive a vaccine. Keep your records in a safe place.

If your child attends licensed child care or school, please notify Public Health when a vaccine is given. You can report the vaccines in one of the following ways:

- **Online:** The Immunization Connect Ontario (ICON) tool available at immunizewdg.ca allows you to report and view your child's immunization record.
- **Email:** vaccine.records@wdgpublichealth.ca
- **Phone:** 1-800-265-7293 ext. 4396
- **Fax:** 1-519-836-2986

For more information visit:

- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health: wdgpublichealth.ca
- Ontario Ministry of Health: www.ontario.ca/page/vaccines
- Immunize Canada: www.immunize.ca
- Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario: www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/immunization/schedule.aspx