

Vaccine Preventable Disease

Hepatitis B Vaccine Fact Sheet

Grade 7
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together

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by the Hepatitis B virus. The Hepatitis B virus can permanently damage your liver. It's the biggest cause of liver cancer. You need your liver to remove waste from your body. People with Hepatitis B often become tired, feverish, lose their appetite and sometimes get yellow skin and eyes (called jaundice).

There are around 300 cases of Hepatitis B reported in Ontario each year. There may be many more people with Hepatitis B. You can get it and not even know it. That means you can infect someone else without knowing.

How do you catch Hepatitis B?

You can get Hepatitis B by coming in contact with blood or other bodily fluids of an infected person. This includes intimate contact with another person, sharing used needles, or sharing dirty piercing or tattooing equipment. An infected mother can also pass it to her child at birth.

You can't get Hepatitis B from someone coughing or from hugging or using the same dishes.

Is there a cure?

There is no cure for Hepatitis B. Most people get well after an infection, but about 10 per cent will carry the virus for life and keep infecting other people. Some people will die.

How do you prevent getting Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B infection can be prevented. The Ministry of Health has a voluntary Hepatitis B vaccination program for all Grade 7 students in Ontario. Two injections are given by a nurse during the school year.

Is the vaccine safe?

The vaccine is safe. It has been used in Canada for many years. It might cause minor side effects such as redness, warmth, slight swelling at the vaccination site, fatigue or a slight fever for a day or two. More serious reactions occurring within 15 days should be reported to your doctor or the local health unit. These include breathing problems, swelling of the face or mouth, hives or rashes, a fever over 39 °C lasting longer than four days, **see a doctor and report it to the Health Unit.**

Who should not get the vaccine?

The risk of getting Hepatitis B is much greater than the risk of becoming ill from the vaccine. However, there are some people who should not have this vaccine.

The nurse will delay giving the vaccine to anyone who has anything more serious than a minor cold. If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a vaccine or a bad reaction to thimerosal (mercury – a preservative in vaccines), aluminum or yeast, check with your doctor before getting this vaccine.

Information for students

On the day of the clinic:

- Make sure you eat a healthy breakfast and lunch.
- Wear loose short sleeves or loose fitting tops to ensure the upper arm can be easily exposed for injection.

Just before you get the vaccine:

- Keep a positive attitude.
- Relax your arm. This makes the immunization less painful.
- Don't look when the nurse gives the injection.
- Keep very still. Don't move or jerk your arm.
- When you finish, give yourself a pat on the back.

Just after you get the vaccine:

- Use your arm as you would normally.
- Remain on school property for 15 minutes in case you have any type of reaction.
- If your arm becomes a bit red or tender after the injection, an ice pack on your arm can feel soothing.