

Hepatitis B vaccine

Parent Information Sheet

NSW Health offers the vaccines recommended for adolescents by the National Health and Medical Research Council in a school vaccination program. Signed parental/guardian consent must be provided.

Your next steps

- Carefully read this information sheet.
- If you would like your child to be vaccinated against hepatitis B, complete the Consent Form and give the signed Consent Form to your child to return to school.
- If you do NOT wish your child to be vaccinated against hepatitis B, do NOT complete or return the Consent Form.

Q. What is hepatitis B disease?

Hepatitis B is a viral disease that causes symptoms such as fever, jaundice and feeling generally unwell and can lead to cirrhosis or cancer of the liver. Some people can develop hepatitis B disease and not be aware that they are infected. These people can pass on the disease without knowing it.

Q. How is hepatitis B spread?

- From infected mother to her baby at birth and through breastfeeding
- Child-to-child, usually through contact between open sores or wounds
- Unsafe sex
- Needle stick injury
- Tattooing or body piercing with unsterile equipment
- Sharing injecting equipment

Q. How do vaccines work?

Vaccines work by triggering the immune system to fight certain infections. If a vaccinated person comes into contact with these infections, their immune system is able to respond more effectively, preventing the disease developing or greatly reducing its severity.

Q. How effective is the vaccine?

Hepatitis B vaccine is very effective in providing protection against hepatitis B infection.

Q. How many doses are required for this course?

In Intensive English Centres, hepatitis B vaccine will be given in a 2-dose course with the second dose given 4-6 months after the first.

Q. Will my child be protected against hepatitis B if he/she only receives one dose of hepatitis B vaccine?

No. Adolescents (aged 11–15 years of age) require 2 adult doses of vaccine to be protected against hepatitis B disease.

Q. Who should be vaccinated?

All students aged 11-15 years of age should receive 2 adult doses of hepatitis B vaccine unless they have already received a course of the vaccine as a baby/child.

Students aged 16 years and over should receive 3 paediatric doses of vaccine. The first 2 doses may be given at the school and then a letter will be provided to take to their GP for completion of the course.

Q. Who should not be vaccinated?

Hepatitis B vaccine should not be given to people who:

- have had anaphylaxis following a previous dose of vaccine
- have had anaphylaxis following any vaccine component
- are pregnant

Q. How safe are vaccines?

Vaccines used in Australia are safe and must pass strict safety testing before being approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). In addition, the TGA monitors the safety of vaccines once they are in use.

Q. What additives does hepatitis B vaccine contain?

The vaccine contains aluminum hydroxide to assist the vaccine to work, may contain yeast proteins and was exposed to bovine-derived materials during manufacture.

Q. What are the side effects of hepatitis B vaccination?

Side effects are commonly mild and usually involve redness, pain and swelling at the injection site or fever. Serious side effects are extremely rare. More information about side effects is available in the Consumer Medical Information (CMI) for the vaccine available from www.health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination. Parents concerned about side effects after vaccination should contact their GP who should also make a report to the local public health unit.

Q. What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that may result in unconsciousness and death if not treated quickly. It occurs very rarely after any vaccination. The school immunisation nurses are fully trained in the treatment of anaphylaxis.

Q. What should I do if I have no records or I cannot remember if my child has already received a course of hepatitis B vaccine?

It is safe for your child to receive another course of hepatitis B vaccine.

Q. My child has received a Hib vaccine. Will this protect my child against hepatitis B?

No. Hib vaccine protects against Haemophilus influenzae type b infection only and is given to babies at 6 weeks, 4 months, 6 months and 18 months of age. It will not protect your child against hepatitis B.

Q. Should the vaccine be given to a female student who is or thinks she may be pregnant?

No. Any female student who is or thinks she may be pregnant should not be vaccinated. On the day of the clinic the vaccination nurse will ask female students if they are or could be pregnant. If a student answers yes to this question, she will not be vaccinated. The student will be urged to immediately discuss the issue with her parent/guardian and to seek medical help. She will also be provided with contact details for a health referral service that will provide advice, support and guidance.

Q. What if my child has asthma and takes cortisone or prednisone by a “puffer”?

Hepatitis B vaccine can be safely administered to someone who has asthma regardless of which medications they are taking.

Q. Who can consent to vaccination and can consent be withdrawn?

Only parents/guardians can consent to vaccination for students less than 18 years of age. Students aged 18 years and over may consent to their own vaccination

and should complete and sign the Consent Form where ‘Parent/Guardian’ is indicated. Consent can be withdrawn at any time by providing the school with written notification of the withdrawal of consent or telephoning the school to withdraw consent.

Q. What can I do if my child missed out on the vaccine because of illness or absence on the day of the nurses’ visit?

If vaccination has been missed at school, catch-up should occur as soon as possible. Parents should contact their local GP or pharmacist to arrange vaccination.

Q. How can I access a record of the vaccinations?

Information about your child’s vaccinations will be uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) so it can be linked to your child’s existing immunisation history.

Parents can request a copy of their child’s AIR Immunisation History Statement at any time up to their child being 14 years of age, and students aged 14 years and over can request their own immunisation history statement, as follows:

- using the Medicare online account through [myGov my.gov.au/](http://myGov.my.gov.au/)
- using the Medicare Express Plus App www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/express-plus-mobile-apps
- calling the AIR General Enquiries Line on 1800 653 809.

Q. What will happen to my child’s information?

The information you provide on the Consent Form is subject to strict confidentiality and privacy protections contained in NSW and Commonwealth legislation (see the enclosed Privacy Statement). The information will be entered into a NSW Health immunisation register and then uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) so it can be linked to your child’s existing immunisation history and viewed on MyGov.

Q. Where can I find more information about school vaccination?

More information is available:

- by visiting the NSW Health website at www.health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination
- by contacting your local public health unit on 1300 066 055