

HEPATITIS B VACCINE INFORMATION

(ENGERIX-B VACCINE, RECOMBIVAX HB® VACCINE)

What is Hepatitis B and how is it spread?

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus. A person with acute hepatitis B infection can become a chronic or lifelong carrier and remain infectious. Chronic infection may lead to serious liver disease, liver cancer or death. Symptoms of Hepatitis B infection include fatigue, fever, loss of appetite, and jaundice (yellow skin and eyes). The virus is found in the blood and body fluids of an infected person and can be spread through sexual contact, sharing toothbrushes or needles with an infected person and through other exposures to these fluids. An infected pregnant person can pass the virus to an unborn child.

How can Hepatitis B be prevented?

- Vaccination is the best way to prevent hepatitis B infection. Risk may also be lowered by avoiding contact with other people's blood and body fluids.

How effective is the Hepatitis B vaccine?

- Hepatitis B vaccine works very well. Hepatitis B vaccine is 95% to 100% effective in preventing chronic infection for at least 30 years following immunization.

What are the side effects of this vaccine?

- The hepatitis B vaccine is safe and well-tolerated. Reactions are usually mild and short-lived and include headache, fatigue, and injection site reactions such as pain, redness and swelling. These side effects mean your immune system is responding to the vaccine and building up protection. Apply ice to the site and/or take a non-aspirin pain reliever to help minimize pain and/or swelling. Serious reactions are rare.
- Students are observed for a minimum of 15 minutes after their vaccination to ensure there are no immediate side effects. Anyone who experiences serious health effects after they leave the clinic should consult their doctor and notify York Region Public Health

More about the Hepatitis B vaccine

- In Ontario, students in grades 7-12 are offered the vaccine at no cost. This vaccine is strongly recommended for students. The Hepatitis B vaccine series requires two doses recommended no earlier than 6 months apart if the vaccine is received between ages 11-15. A third dose is needed for students vaccinated at age 16 or older.
- If you are unsure if your child was previously vaccinated with Hepatitis B vaccine, your child should receive the dose(s) offered at the earliest opportunity.
- Get protection early, be vaccinated at the earliest opportunity. If your child misses being vaccinated in school, they can still receive Hepatitis B vaccine at a York Region Public Health community clinic. Visit york.ca/immunization for clinic information

Who should NOT get this vaccine at school and should consult their health care provider?

- Those who have had a severe reaction to a vaccine (e.g., anaphylaxis)
- Those who have an illness or take any medication that weakens the immune system
- Those with previous severe allergic reaction to previous Hepatitis B vaccine or, or any of its specific components or container (e.g including aluminum, latex, yeast, or Thimerosal)
- Vaccination should be postponed in persons with moderate or severe acute illness. Persons with minor acute illness may be vaccinated if not under isolation for COVID-19.