

HOW TO GET THE VACCINE

Speak to your healthcare provider about starting a course of the hepatitis B vaccine, or show them the *Free Hepatitis B Vaccine* card. For adults, a total of three injections will be needed over six months to complete the course.

A blood test for hepatitis B must be done prior to the vaccination. This will check to see if you are immune to the hepatitis B virus or susceptible to the infection. If you are not immune, you will receive the full three course dose of the hepatitis B vaccine.

The blood test will also diagnose people who are living with hepatitis B. If this is the case, your healthcare provider will talk to you about what this means and how you can keep your liver healthy.

IS THE VACCINE SAFE?

Yes, the hepatitis B vaccine is very safe and effective. Since the early 1980's over 1 billion doses have been used worldwide. As with all vaccinations, there may be some side effects like redness and swelling at the injection site and a mild fever.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the Immunisation Section, SA Health on 1300 232 272 or visit the website www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/freehepbvaccine.

Further information is also available from:

Hepatitis SA
Helpline: 1800 437 222
<http://hepsa.asn.au/>

REFERENCES

SA Health: You've Got What?
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/YouveGotWhat

Hepatitis SA
<http://hepsa.asn.au/>

The Australian Immunisation Handbook
<https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/>

National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance
fact sheet: Hepatitis B vaccines for Australians
<http://www.ncirs.edu.au/provider-resources/ncirs-fact-sheets/>

ASHM: Hepatitis B Fact Sheet for people with chronic infection
<https://www.hepatitisb.org.au/patient-resources/>

World Health Organization fact sheet: Hepatitis B
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs204/en/>

Immunisation Section, SA Health
Telephone: 1300 232 272
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation



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FREE HEPATITIS B VACCINE.

HEPATITIS B COULD YOU BE AT RISK?

Hepatitis means 'INFLAMMATION OF THE LIVER'

WHAT IS HEPATITIS B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that infects the liver, and is the most common liver infection in the world. It is a highly infectious virus that is preventable through vaccination.

Hepatitis B can be an acute infection (short-term) or develop into a chronic infection (long-term). An acute infection refers to the first six months after a person becomes infected with the virus. This can range from a mild illness to a serious condition that requires hospitalisation. If the infection lasts longer than six months it is a chronic infection, which means it is a lifelong illness. Without regular check-ups with a doctor, chronic hepatitis B can lead to serious liver damage (cirrhosis), liver cancer or even death. There is no cure for hepatitis B but treatments are available.

In Australia, most people living with chronic hepatitis B were infected at birth, and come from regions where hepatitis B is common. This includes parts of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander communities.

HOW IS HEPATITIS B SPREAD?

The hepatitis B virus is most commonly spread when the blood or sexual fluids of a person living with hepatitis B enters the bloodstream of a person with no immunity to hepatitis B (i.e. a person who has not been vaccinated). This can occur via:

- mother to newborn baby
- blood to blood contact through open wounds
- sex without a condom
- sharing personal items that may contain blood like razors and toothbrushes
- sharing equipment for injecting drugs
- unsterile tattooing or piercing equipment
- needle-stick injuries.

Hepatitis B is *not* spread through:

- hugging, kissing, tears, coughing or sneezing
- sharing cups, plates, food, clothes, drinks, bathrooms
- mosquito bites.

FREE HEPATITIS B VACCINE

The hepatitis B vaccine is available for FREE to people who are at increased risk of infection with hepatitis B, they include:

- household contacts of people with acute or chronic hepatitis B
- people adopting children from overseas who have chronic or acute hepatitis B
- people who have HIV, chronic liver disease and/or hepatitis C
- sexual contacts of people with acute or chronic hepatitis B
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- new arrival refugees to South Australia
- men who have sex with men
- people with developmental disabilities
- people who inject drugs
- people in custodial settings
- people who are homeless
- sex workers
- clients of sexual health services.

**Hepatitis B is a highly infectious virus,
but it can be prevented through vaccination.**