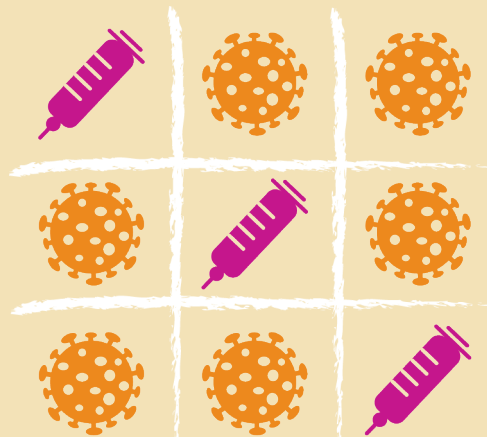


## Hepatitis B Vaccination



### What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a potentially life-threatening liver disease caused by hepatitis B virus (HBV). HBV is found in blood and body fluids of carriers.

### Spread in the following ways



It has an incubation period of 6 weeks to 6 months. During the acute infection phase, most people do not have any symptoms. If symptoms occur, they may include yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice), mild fever, tiredness, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.





Approximately 5-10% of adults and 70%-90% of infants infected are unable to clear the virus, thus becoming chronic carriers. About a quarter of the chronic carriers might develop chronic liver damage including cirrhosis and liver cancer.

HBV infection occurs throughout the world. It is estimated that globally more than 240 million people have chronic liver infection. In Southeast Asia including Hong Kong, the overall prevalence of chronic hepatitis B infection is moderate to high.

### How can we prevent Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B vaccination is the most effective means to prevent hepatitis B. About 90 to 95% of people will gain life-long immunity to hepatitis B after a full course of vaccination.

In addition, as hepatitis B can be transmitted via blood and body fluids, the following precautions which are the same as those against other blood-borne infections should be taken:

-  All wounds should be properly dressed.
-  Objects contaminated with blood should be disinfected with diluted household bleach (1 part of bleach with 4 parts of water)
-  Do not share syringes, shavers, razors, toothbrushes and other objects that may be contaminated with blood. Equipment for acupuncture, tattooing and ear piercing should be adequately sterilized.
-  Practise safer sex and proper use of latex condoms.

### What is Hepatitis B vaccine?

The hepatitis B vaccine is composed of the purified surface antigen of HBV. It has been proven to be safe and effective in preventing HBV infection and its chronic consequences.

The complete course of vaccination takes a total of three injections. The second injection is given 1 month after the first, and the third injection 5 months after the second.



After complete course of hepatitis B vaccination, about 90 to 95% of people would produce protective antibody levels against infection. Protection lasts lifelong.

It is preferably to have blood tests for hepatitis B status before vaccination. Vaccination is not required for people who already have natural immunity to hepatitis B. If you are tested to be a HBV carrier, you should seek medical advice even though you may not experience any symptom. Vaccination is not effective in this case.

### Who should be vaccinated?

With the implementation of universal neonatal hepatitis B vaccination programme in Hong Kong since 1988, all newborns would receive the birth dose of vaccination in the hospital. They should receive the second and third doses according to the schedule of the childhood immunization programme. In addition, the following groups of people are at high risk of the infection and they should also receive the vaccine:

#### People who are at high risk of the infection

- 1 Household and sexual contacts of HBV carriers
- 2 Intravenous drug users
- 3 People who receive blood or blood products on a regular basis
- 4 People on dialysis
- 5 Health care workers who might be in contact with blood or other body fluids

### What are the adverse effects of the vaccine?

Hepatitis B vaccine is usually well tolerated. Occasionally there may be slight soreness around the injection site and mild fever.

Severe allergic reactions like hives, swelling of the lips or tongue, and difficulties in breathing are uncommon, and usually occur within the first few hours after vaccination.



### Where can I get the vaccine?

Babies born in Hong Kong would receive the birth dose of vaccination in the hospital. The second and third doses will be given for free at 1 month and 6 months of age in the Maternal & Child Health Centres, Department of Health. Babies born to HBV carrier mothers should receive an additional dose of hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) at birth.

The Maternal & Child Health Centres, Department of Health offer free hepatitis B vaccination to children under age of six. For arrangement of Hepatitis B vaccination of adults in the general population, please consult your family doctor.



### Where can I get more information?

Consult your family doctor  
Call 2112 9911, Hepatitis Hotline of the Department of Health  
Visit the Hepatitis Website of Department of Health :  
[www.hepatitis.gov.hk](http://www.hepatitis.gov.hk)



Viral Hepatitis Preventive Service  
Special Preventive Programme  
Department of Health