IMMUNIZATION INFORMATION

Hepatitis B Vaccine

What is hepatitis B?

- Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks the liver.
- Chronic cases (meaning the virus stays in the body for longer than 6 months) can cause permanent liver damage, scarring, and liver cancer.
- Some people who get hepatitis B become very sick, with fever, yellow skin and eyes (jaundice), vomiting, and pain in the abdomen.
- About half the people who are infected with hepatitis B may never feel sick, and they can spread the disease without knowing it.
- It is the number one cause of liver cancer in the world.
- Hepatitis B is caused by contact with infected blood or body fluids. This can happen in any of the following ways:
  - » Through a break in the skin such as a cut, bleeding gums, needle stick, or tattoo
  - » By sharing needles, toothbrushes, or razors
  - » During unprotected sexual contact
  - » During birth, from a birthing parent who has the virus
- It is preventable through immunization.

What is the hepatitis B vaccine?

- The hepatitis B vaccine is known to prevent infection from 95% to 100% of the time if it is given before the person is exposed to the disease.
- The hepatitis B vaccine contains tiny pieces of the hepatitis B virus called proteins. These proteins are not active, cannot make you sick, and will help your immune system recognize and fight the hepatitis B virus if you are exposed in the future.
- The vaccine contains no blood or living virus.
- People receiving the hepatitis B vaccine will usually follow a two- or three-dose schedule. The number of doses to be given and schedule for administration depends upon the age of the client and the product being used. A person needs to get all required doses for their age to be fully protected.

Who should receive the hepatitis B vaccine?

- In Nova Scotia, the hepatitis B vaccine is routinely offered to children in the School Immunization Program. Like all other vaccines, the hepatitis B vaccine works best when it is given before an exposure to hepatitis B has happened. This is why hepatitis B vaccine is offered in schools, before most children are at risk for exposure.

Who should NOT receive the hepatitis B vaccine?

- People who have already received the hepatitis B or Twinrix vaccine. If your child was born outside of Nova Scotia, check their immunization records to see if they have already received the hepatitis B vaccine.
- People who have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose or any component of hepatitis B vaccine.
- People who are sick or have a fever (temperature of 38.5°C/101.3°F or greater).

Please read other side.

www.nshealth.ca/immunizations

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IMMUNIZATION AFTERCARE

Hepatitis B Vaccine

People should stay in the clinic for at least 15 minutes after receiving any type of immunization to monitor possible reaction. As with any vaccine there is a slight possibility that a more serious reaction could occur.

What are the possible side effects from the hepatitis B vaccine?

- As with any other vaccine, the most common side effects are soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site.
- Less common side effects include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, loss of appetite, flu-like symptoms, or generally feeling unwell.

As fever may occur, make sure you have acetaminophen or ibuprofen at home. Follow the instructions that come with the product. Talk to your healthcare provider before using either of these medications as they are not recommended for people with certain medical conditions.

Call your healthcare provider if:

- A fever lasts longer than 24 hours.
- A fever is 38.5°C (101.3°F) or higher.
- A fever doesn't come down after acetaminophen or ibuprofen are taken.
- Other illness or symptoms occur.

Questions?

If you have any questions about about hepatitis B or the hepatitis B vaccine, please call your local Public Health office (see list of offices here: www.nshealth.ca/public-health) or your healthcare provider.

For more information on immunization, please visit the following websites:

Nova Scotia Health Public Health
www.nshealth.ca/immunizations

Immunize Canada
immunize.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada
www.canada.ca/public-health

Canadian Paediatric Society
cps.ca

811
811.novascotia.ca

www.nshealth.ca/immunizations

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