

**HEPATITIS B** is a highly contagious and very serious liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus. It is spread through contact with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person, including contact with objects that could have blood or body fluids on them. Some of these items includes toothbrushes and razors. The hepatitis B virus can cause:

- **ACUTE (SHORT-TERM) ILLNESS** and the symptoms of which are: flu-like and include loss of appetite, tiredness, joint and muscle pain, diarrhea, vomiting and jaundice. Most adults who get hepatitis B have this acute form of hepatitis B but eventually get better.
- **CHRONIC (LONG-TERM) INFECTION** can be very serious and often leads to liver damage, liver cancer, or death. Babies and young children infected with hepatitis B are more likely to get this chronic form of the disease.

## WHO SHOULD GET THE HEPATITIS B VACCINE?

All children should get their first dose at birth and a second dose between 1-2 months of age. Children should have completed their vaccine series by 6-18 months of age. Children and adolescents through 18 years of age who did not get the vaccine when they were younger should be vaccinated. Adults at increased risk of acquiring hepatitis B, as well as any person who desires protection from hepatitis B should also be vaccinated.

Persons at increased risk are as follows: Those whose sex partner is infected with hepatitis B, Men who have sex with men, People who inject street drugs, People with more than one sex partner, People with chronic liver or kidney disease, or HIV infection, People with jobs that expose them to human blood, Household contacts of people infected with hepatitis B, Residents and staff in institutions for the developmentally disabled, Kidney dialysis patients, People who travel to countries where hepatitis B is common, People under 60 years of age with diabetes.

## WHO SHOULD NOT GET THE HEPATITIS B VACCINE?

- Anyone with a life-threatening allergy to baker's yeast, or to any component of the vaccine should not get the hepatitis B vaccine. Tell your provider if you have any serious allergies.
- Anyone who has had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of hepatitis B vaccine should not get another dose.
- Anyone who is moderately or severely ill should probably wait until they recover.
- Pregnant women who need protection from hepatitis B may be vaccinated, but should check with their doctor first.

## WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE HEPATITIS B VACCINE?

Mild-to-moderate problems: Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given, headache, tiredness, fever and loss of appetite. Severe problems (rare): Difficulty breathing, wheezing, hives, pale skin, fast heartbeat, and dizziness.

## REFERENCES

Hamborsky J, Kroger A, Wolfe S, eds. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases*. 13th ed. Washington, DC: Public Health Foundation, 2015.

Vaccine Information Statement: *Hepatitis B Vaccine (What You Need to Know)* February 2, 2012.  
[Http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/hep-b.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/hep-b.pdf). Accessed June 2016.