

HEPATITIS B VACCINATION

What is the hepatitis B vaccine?

The hepatitis B vaccine is the first anti-cancer vaccine because it prevents hepatitis B infections, which can lead to liver cancer later in life. The vaccine is made in a chemistry lab. No human blood is used in the vaccine, so you cannot get hepatitis B from the vaccine. There are two brands of vaccine in the United States: Recombivax HB (Merck) and Engerix B (GlaxoSmithKline). Although both vaccines will provide equal protection against hepatitis B, doctors may order one brand or another.

How is the vaccine given?

In general, the hepatitis B vaccine series includes two or three shots that are given over a six month period. Adults and children receive shots in their arm. Babies receive shots in their leg. After the first dose of vaccine, you will start to develop protection within several weeks. So it's never too late to start. It is very important to complete the entire series of the vaccine to obtain full protection against hepatitis B. The vaccine can be given in your doctor's office or a local health clinic.

Who should be vaccinated?

Anyone who falls into a “high risk” group for infection (see [General Information](#)) should be vaccinated. All newborn babies and children up to age 18 years should be vaccinated. Most states now require the hepatitis B vaccine for school entry. Many colleges are also requiring the vaccine for its students. Asian adults, including pregnant women, are at high risk and should talk to their doctor about being tested and getting the vaccine.

Hepatitis B can be prevented through vaccination - it only take three shots to protect yourself and loved ones for a lifetime against hepatitis B.

Is the vaccine safe?

Yes, the hepatitis B vaccine is considered one of the safest vaccines ever made. More than one billion doses have been given throughout the world. Medical and scientific studies have shown that it is very safe and effective. The vaccine is made in a laboratory. You cannot get hepatitis B from the vaccine.

Are there any side effects from the vaccine?

The most common side effects are redness and soreness in the arm where the shot is given. Make sure you discuss with your doctor any possible allergic reactions or side effects before getting the vaccine.