



UK Health
Security
Agency



Hepatitis B vaccination for people with chronic kidney disease

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B (also sometimes called Hep B or HBV) is a virus carried in the blood which can affect the liver, causing damage and liver inflammation (also known as hepatitis). Longer term problems of hepatitis B include liver cirrhosis (scarring) and liver cancer.



How can I be protected from hepatitis B?

You can be protected from hepatitis B by being vaccinated. The vaccine encourages your body to produce antibodies to the hepatitis B virus so that it will fight the virus if it enters your bloodstream. This will significantly reduce (by up to 90%) the chance of you contracting the virus. It is important to complete the vaccination course.

Why should people with kidney disease be vaccinated against hepatitis B?

People with chronic kidney disease often require treatment such as dialysis and transplant, so they are at a slightly increased risk of getting hepatitis B because of the potential exposure to blood during their treatment.

Most healthy adults exposed to hepatitis B will clear the infection. However, kidney patients are at a higher risk of developing persistent hepatitis B infection and related liver disease. Kidney units and hospitals have procedures and policies in place to reduce the risk of hepatitis B infection, but the risk cannot be removed completely.

Therefore, it is recommended that all people with chronic kidney disease that are having dialysis now or in the future are vaccinated against the hepatitis B virus. It is strongly recommended that people with chronic kidney disease receive the vaccine course before they require dialysis as they will respond better to the vaccine.

How/where can I get the vaccine?

If you would like to be vaccinated, please speak to your kidney nurse, either on the renal unit or in clinic and they can arrange this for you. You will be vaccinated either at your kidney unit or in an outpatient clinic.

What is the vaccination course?

There are different brands of hepatitis B vaccine available, some require three doses over 6 months others require four doses. The type you have will depend on your hospital and availability of vaccines.

- **3 vaccine course:**
0, 1 and 6 months
- **4 vaccine course:**
0, 1, 2 and 6 months

It is important to have the full course of vaccines or you may not be fully protected.

If you miss or have a delayed dose you should resume where you left off; you do not need to restart the whole course.

It is recommended that, where possible, you complete the course using the same brand of vaccine and not interchange them.

The injection is given into the muscle in the upper arm.

When should I not receive the vaccine?

There are very few people who cannot have the vaccine. If you are unwell and have a temperature on the day it is due you should postpone the vaccine until you have fully recovered to avoid wrongly attributing any signs or symptoms from the illness to side effects of the vaccine.

You should not have the vaccine if you have had a very serious (anaphylactic) reaction to a previous dose of hepatitis B vaccine or a component of the vaccine. If unsure seek medical advice.

Hepatitis B vaccines can be given at the same time as other vaccines such as flu or COVID vaccines.

What are the risks and side effects?

Side effects from having the vaccine are very uncommon.

You may develop some redness and soreness at the injection site.

Some people develop a mild fever and some flu like symptoms after the injection. However, this is rare. If you do feel unwell or are worried about side effects, please speak to your kidney nurse or unit for advice.

Very rarely, people have an allergic reaction to the vaccine. If you develop a rash, any swelling of the face or difficulty in swallowing please seek urgent medical advice either from your doctor or by dialling 111. In an emergency call 999.



How long does the vaccine protection last?

Once you have completed your vaccine course you will have a blood test 4 to 8 weeks later to check that your body has made enough antibodies to protect you from the hepatitis B virus.

Your antibodies will be checked again, usually in 6 months, to see if you need a booster dose of vaccine.

Kidney patients sometimes take longer to produce enough antibodies or may not produce enough. If this is the case after a booster dose, then it may be necessary to repeat the vaccine course with the same or a different vaccine to help you make more antibodies.

A booster dose of vaccine may be recommended if you are planning to travel abroad to countries that have a higher risk of hepatitis B such as parts of Africa and the Indian sub-continent.

Your kidney service will regularly monitor your antibodies to hepatitis B virus and give you a vaccine booster dose if needed.

Any questions?

If you have any further questions about hepatitis B vaccination, please ask your kidney nurse or doctor.

Further useful information

Further information can be found in the vaccine manufacturer's information leaflet that comes with the vaccine. If you do not have a copy or you would like one, please ask your kidney nurse for one.

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the yellow card scheme



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