

# Important Information about **Hepatitis B** and Hepatitis B Vaccine

## PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY

### 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 pregnant parent who has the virus
- It is preventable through immunization.

### What is Hepatitis B vaccine?

- 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 fight the Hepatitis B virus if you are exposed in the future.
- The vaccine contains no blood or living virus.

### 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.

### CAUTION

#### Who should NOT receive the Hepatitis B vaccine?

- People who have already received 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 Hepatitis B immunization.
- 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.*

# What to Expect Following Immunization with the **Hepatitis B Vaccine**

## VACCINE INFORMATION

This vaccine protects against the Hepatitis B 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.

***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.

***Over-the-counter pain relievers such as ibuprofen (e.g., Advil ) and acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) can be used to manage symptoms following vaccination, including fever. Some people should not take these medications. Talk to your health care provider or pharmacist if you have questions, or are unsure if you should take these.***

### **Call your health care provider if:**

- The fever lasts longer than 24 hours.
- Your child's temperature is 38.5°C (101.3°F) or greater.
- The fever does not come down after the acetaminophen or ibuprofen is taken.

### **Questions?**

If you have any questions 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-offices](http://www.nshealth.ca/public-health-offices)), or your health care provider.

For more information on immunization, please visit the websites of

- Nova Scotia Health, Public Health at <https://www.nshealth.ca/public-health/immunizations>
- Immunize Canada at [immunize.ca](http://immunize.ca)
- the Public Health Agency of Canada at [phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://phac-aspc.gc.ca)
- 811 at <https://811.novascotia.ca/>