

Hepatitis B Vaccine

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a type of infection of the liver caused by hepatitis B virus. It is transmitted by blood and body fluids. A mother who is a hepatitis B carrier has a great chance of transmitting the virus to her baby at or around the time of delivery.

Symptoms of acute hepatitis include extreme tiredness, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea and yellow discoloration of the skin and whites of the eyes. Majority of acute infections resolve completely. However, some persons may become chronic carriers, who may eventually develop chronic liver diseases, such as cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer. Around 8% of Hong Kong population are chronic hepatitis B carriers.

Hepatitis B Vaccine (HBV)

A. Why get vaccinated?

Hepatitis B vaccine (HBV) can effectively protect against hepatitis B and its complications like liver cancer. **All babies and children** should receive HBV.

B. When should my child get vaccinated?

Full Term Babies

	Babies born to hepatitis B carrier mothers	Babies born to non-hepatitis B carrier mothers
First Dose	Within 24 hours after birth (together with hepatitis B immunoglobulin)	As soon as after birth
Second Dose	4 weeks after the first dose	
Third Dose	8 weeks after the second dose AND babies at 6 months of age or above	

To achieve the best and lasting protection, children must complete **all three doses** of HBV. HBV can be given together with other types of vaccines.

Preterm Babies

All preterm babies **born to hepatitis B carrier mothers** should receive HBV together with hepatitis B immunoglobulin at birth. However, this dose may not be counted in the 3-dose course of vaccination. If the attending paediatrician considered this dose as invalid, the first valid dose should be given to the baby 4 weeks later.

All preterm babies **born to non-hepatitis B carrier mothers** with birth weight 2 kg or more should receive the first dose of HBV at birth. Preterm babies with birth weight less than 2 kg should receive the first dose of HBV by the time when the baby's body weight achieves 2 kg or the baby is at one month of age, whichever is earlier. However, as long as these babies are medically stable and show consistent weight gain, the first valid dose of HBV may be given before the babies reach 2 kg or one month of age.

Other Situation

Children who have not yet received a full course of hepatitis B vaccination or with unknown vaccination history should receive hepatitis B vaccination to protect their health.

C. Some individuals should NOT get HBV

- serious allergic reaction to yeast (for baking bread)
- serious allergic reaction to previous dose of HBV

D. What are the Risks?

- As with any medicine, HBV carries a small risk of adverse reaction.
- HBV is a mild vaccine and normally does not cause serious adverse reactions. Occasionally there may be slight soreness around the injection site, but these will gradually subside in 1-2 days.

If you have any query, please ask the nurses or doctors at our Maternal & Child Health Centres of the Department of Health.