

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 people may become chronic carriers, who may eventually develop chronic liver diseases, such as cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer.

Hepatitis B Vaccine (HBV)

A. Why get vaccinated?

Hepatitis B vaccine (HBV) can effectively protect against hepatitis B and its complications like liver cancer. In Hong Kong, HBV is included in the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme.

B. When should my child get vaccinated?

i. Full Term Babies

The standard vaccination scheme is as follows:

	Babies born to hepatitis B carrier mothers	Babies born to non-hepatitis B carrier mothers
Birth dose / First Dose	Within 24 hours after birth (together with hepatitis B immunoglobulin)	Within 24 hours after birth
Second Dose	1 month of age	
Third Dose	6 months of age	

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.

ii. 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 the baby's body weight achieves 2 kg or the baby is at one month of age, whichever is earlier.

Other Situation

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

C. The following individuals should NOT receive HBV

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

D. What are the side effects?

- 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 contact Maternal & Child Health
Centres of the Department of Health.