

All Kids Need Hepatitis B Shots!

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus. This virus can enter the bloodstream, attack the liver, and cause severe illness. In some cases, the virus can remain in the body for a lifetime and cause ongoing liver damage.

How do children and teens get hepatitis B?

Lots of ways. Hepatitis B virus can be spread by:

- coming in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids
- sharing toothbrushes, razors, or needles of an infected person
- human bites
- sex with an infected person
- ear piercing, body piercing, or tattooing with unsterile equipment



A series of shots can prevent this very serious disease!

Why do my children need hepatitis B shots?

All the major medical organizations in the United States agree that all children 0–18 years of age need a series of hepatitis B shots in order to be protected from this disease. Newborn babies should receive their first shot of hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth. If your children or teens were not vaccinated against hepatitis B when they were younger, vaccinate them now.

Over half of parents don't know how their children got infected with hepatitis B virus

Is my child at increased risk for infection with hepatitis B virus?

Anyone can get infected with this virus. However, children who were born, or whose parents were born, outside the United States where hepatitis B virus infection is a serious problem may be at increased risk for getting infected.

Some of the places where hepatitis B is a serious problem include Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and some parts of South America. Check with your doctor or local health department if you have questions about this.

All children 0–18 years of age need hepatitis B vaccine!

If you or your children were born in a country where infection with hepatitis B virus is common, your doctor may want to do blood tests on your children to find out if they have already been infected with this virus. Testing can be done at the same visit as vaccinations.

How safe is this vaccine?

Hepatitis B vaccine is one of the safest vaccines available. It has been used in the United States since 1982 and has been shown to be safe and effective.

Everyone needs vaccinations!

Vaccinations are free or low cost for children when families can't afford them. Call your healthcare provider or local/state health department to find out where to go for affordable vaccinations. You can access a listing of telephone numbers for state immunization programs at www.immunize.org/ coordinators. Your child's health depends on timely vaccinations.



And here's a friendly reminder for parents:

Adults need vaccines, too! Call your clinic or health department to find out which vaccines you need and when your next ones are due. Your children are counting on you to stay healthy!

