

# Hepatitis B

## Information for Patients

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### What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks the liver. People who get hepatitis B can be quite sick.

### How do you get hepatitis B?

It is often spread from one person to another in blood & body fluids. It can also be spread by having infected blood get into small cuts in your skin.

### Am I at risk of getting hepatitis B?

Kidney disease may become a chronic illness. People with a chronic illness often have weaker immune systems.

### Is there a cure for hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B cannot be cured, but it can be prevented. People with kidney disease should be immunized. Check with your doctor.

### How do I get vaccinated?

First, you will need a blood test to make sure that you do not **have** hepatitis B & to check for antibodies (or “fighters”) for hepatitis B. If both of these tests are negative, the vaccine will be ordered.

### How does the vaccine work?

The vaccinations will force your body to make antibodies that fight the hepatitis B virus. The antibodies protect you from getting hepatitis B.

The vaccination is a series of needles recommended to be given over 6 months. A booster or extra dose may be required.

### Are there any side effects from the vaccine?

There are a few side effects. The most common side effect is soreness where the needle was given. You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) if your arms are sore. Other side effects are:

- Joint pain
- Feeling sick to your stomach
- Rash
- Fever

### How much does the vaccination series cost?

It is free for people with kidney disease.

(This sheet contains general information, & your symptoms & treatment may vary according to your circumstance. If you have any specific questions, please contact your nurse, pharmacist, or doctor.)

