

PROTECTION FROM HEPATITIS B

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease. It is caused by a virus and can result in permanent liver damage, or lead to other liver problems such as cirrhosis or cancer. To prevent the spread of this disease, community/public health nurses will offer vaccination in the school setting. You will be asked to sign one consent form for the complete series before your child is vaccinated. Two needles for this age group is usually given.

How is Hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B can be spread by close contact with body fluids such as blood, saliva, sweat, tears and semen from an infected person. People can have this disease without knowing it, and pass it on to others. While it is often spread by sexual contact, in one third of cases the method of spread is unknown. Hepatitis B can possibly be spread through something as simple as an open wound when helping a friend bandage a cut or with a nosebleed. Hepatitis B can also be spread by dirty intravenous needles or from a mother to her baby during pregnancy and childbirth.

Why give the vaccine?

Many new cases of Hepatitis B occur in teenagers and young adults. Vaccinating Grade Six students will protect them before they might be exposed to the virus.

Is the Hepatitis B vaccine safe?

Yes, Hepatitis B is a safe vaccine. It contains no blood or living virus.

Why do you need two needles?

One needle will not provide full protection against Hepatitis B. For protection the complete series is needed.

Are there any side effects?

Hepatitis B vaccine usually has no major side effects. After the injection, you may have a sore arm for a day or two or have a slight fever or tiredness.

Hepatitis B: The Facts

- The number of cases in Canada has been growing steadily since 1980.
- Symptoms include tiredness, fever, and loss of appetite, yellow skin and eyes. These symptoms may last for weeks or months.
- Most people recover from the disease. Up to 10% of people who get Hepatitis B become carriers. That means they can pass it on to others. Once you are a Hepatitis B carrier, there is no cure.
- Carriers could develop severe liver damage such as cirrhosis or cancer.
- Hepatitis B is not spread by coughing, sneezing or hugging.

For additional information and services contact
your Regional Health Authority listed in the
white pages of your telephone book.