

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a liver infection that can have serious consequences. It is highly contagious. People can become infected through unprotected sexual contact or blood-blood contacts. In countries where hepatitis B is common, babies can become infected through contact with the mother's blood during and after the birth. Vaccination can prevent hepatitis B.

Who is entitled to free vaccination?

Free vaccination is intended for men who have sex with men and prostitutes. These are people who run an increased risk of hepatitis B through sexual contact. In order to protect them from hepatitis B, the government offers them free vaccination. The nurse or doctor will discuss the possibility of free vaccination with you.

Vaccination against hepatitis B

The vaccine is delivered on three occasions: during the first consultation, 1 month later and a minimum of 5 months after the 2nd vaccination. The vaccine is safe and good.

There are seldom any side effects and these are usually not serious. The vaccination causes little discomfort although there may be some muscular pain at the place of the injection.

What happens if you take part?

If you want to be vaccinated, you will be given your first injection during the initial consultation. A blood sample will also be taken. The sample will show whether you have ever been infected, and if the infection is chronic. You could have been infected without knowing it. You will be given the result of the blood test when you come for the second vaccination.

Result of the blood test

When you come for the second time, you will be given advice based on the results of the blood test:

- By far the majority of people are advised to have the second two injections for protection against hepatitis B.
- Some people do not need any further vaccinations, because they have already had hepatitis B.
- A small proportion of patients are referred to a doctor or social nurse because they have a chronic hepatitis B infection. People with a chronic infection are infectious to others and in the long term, can develop serious liver disorders. In the consultation, they will be given information and advice to see a doctor for further examination and possibly treatment.

After vaccination

Sometimes there is a little pain, redness or stiffness at the point of vaccination. These side effects are normal. If you develop serious complaints after the vaccination, you should contact your GP. Please report this to us when you come for the next vaccination.

The vaccine is effective

After three vaccinations, by far the majority of people have long-term protection against the disease (probably for life). They can no longer catch the disease.

Some people are not fully protected after vaccination. In particular, people with HIV or hepatitis C and people older than 50 have an increased risk of not being fully protected after the three vaccinations. To be sure that you are protected, you can have your blood tested 4 to 6 weeks after your 3rd vaccination. Ask the nurse about this. This blood test is not free but will sometimes be covered by health insurance. If it appears that you are not adequately protected, you will qualify for a further 3 free vaccinations.

Your personal details

Your personal details will be treated as confidential. You can also take part anonymously.

We would still prefer you to give a telephone number where we can reach you.

The vaccination data are also used for research into the numbers of people who have been vaccinated. Information for research purposes is made anonymous. The researcher will not know your personal details.

Hepatitis A

Men who have sex with other men also run the risk of catching hepatitis A through sexual contact. Hepatitis A is a different form of hepatitis that you can catch by such activities as oral-anal contact (ass-licking). Almost everyone can be cured of hepatitis A but you may be very sick for a few months. There is a special vaccine that provides protection against hepatitis A and B (Twinrix®). This combination vaccine is also a series of 3 vaccinations. For this combination vaccine you pay a charge (contribution) for each vaccination.

Any questions?

If you have any other questions, please ask the nurse.

National vaccination campaign, hepatitis B risk groups
GGD Nederland
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