

Hepatitis B vaccine

Hepatitis B is a serious disease that affects the liver. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). HBV can cause:

1. *Acute (short-term) illness.* This can lead to:
 - loss of appetite
 - diarrhea and vomiting
 - tiredness
 - jaundice (yellow skin or eyes)
 - pain in muscles, joints, and stomach

Acute illness is more common among adults. Children who become infected usually do not have acute illness.

2. *Chronic (long-term) infection.* Some people go on to develop chronic HBV infection. This can be very serious, and often leads to:
 - liver damage (cirrhosis)
 - liver cancer
 - death

Chronic infection is more common among infants and children than among adults.

People who are infected can spread HBV to others, even if they don't appear sick. In 2005, about 51,000 people became infected with hepatitis B. About 1.25 million people in the United States have chronic HBV infection. Each year about 3,000 to 5,000 people die from cirrhosis or liver cancer caused by HBV.

Hepatitis B virus is spread through contact with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person.

The HBV vaccine is safe and effective even in newborns. It is given as a three dose series which can be completed during the first year of life.