

# FACT SHEET

## Hepatitis B Vaccine for Students

**Grade 7 students are offered this vaccine as part of Ontario's free vaccine program.**

### What is hepatitis B and how do you get it?

- Hepatitis B is a virus that may cause long-term liver damage and is the leading cause of liver cancer.
- Hepatitis B is found in the blood or other body fluids of an infected person. It can be spread through sexual contact, contaminated body/ear piercing and tattooing equipment, razors, scissors, nail clippers, or toothbrushes from people with hepatitis B. Pregnant mothers individuals infected with hepatitis B can also pass the virus to the baby at birth.
- Over 100 cases of hepatitis B are reported each year in Ontario<sup>1</sup>.

### What are the symptoms of hepatitis B and can it be prevented?

- Symptoms of hepatitis B can include fatigue, fever, loss of appetite, and jaundice (yellow skin and eyes).
- Hepatitis B can be prevented through immunization. The vaccine is between 95 per cent and 100 per cent effective when you receive a complete series.

### Why should my child receive the hepatitis B vaccine series?

- An up-to-date hepatitis B series is required for students entering health-related programs at colleges and universities.
- For protection during travel to countries where medical equipment is not sterilized to Canadian standards.
- For protection if exposed to blood and other body fluids when providing first aid treatment.

### What is in the hepatitis B vaccine?

Contents	Where else are they found
Pieces of hepatitis B virus	Hepatitis B disease
Aluminum	Vegetables, cereal, deodorant
Sodium chloride	Human body, table salt
Sodium borate	Water softener, soap, soil
Yeast	Human body, bread, bagels
Formaldehyde	Human body, fruits, fish
Latex ( <i>Recombivax vial only</i> )	Disposable gloves, balloons

### What to expect after receiving the hepatitis B immunization?

- The hepatitis B vaccine is very safe and has been used in Canada for more than 35 years<sup>2</sup>.
- It is common to have some redness, swelling, or pain at the site where the needle was given. Some students may develop a headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and on rare occasions, have nausea and/or vomiting. It is very rare for a severe reaction to occur. Difficulty with breathing, swelling of the mouth or face, hives, a rash, or seizure/convulsions require immediate medical care. Concerns about your child's symptoms should be reported to your healthcare provider and the Health Unit.

### Who should not receive the vaccine?

- Those who are fevered the day of the clinic should wait until feeling better.
- Anyone with a weakened immune system due to illness, medication, or therapy should speak with their specialist prior to vaccination.
- Anyone with an allergy to any part of the vaccine.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, consult your healthcare provider.

### How can I prepare my child?



Talk to your child about the vaccine.



Review helpful ways to deal with fear or anxiety (count to ten, look away from needle, focus on breathing).



Make sure your child eats on clinic day.



Make sure your child wears a short sleeved shirt on clinic day.

### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/publications/immune/hepb.aspx#:~:text=There%20are%20over%20100%20cases,and%20not%20have%20any%20symptoms.>

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Public Health Agency Association. <https://www.cpha.ca/immunization-timeline>.