

Hepatitis B Vaccine: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

The hepatitis B vaccine protects against infection with the hepatitis B virus. A hepatitis B infection can damage the liver and lead to liver cancer.

The vaccine is given to adults in three doses. You receive the shots in your upper arm. You should get the second shot at least 1 month after the first one. The third shot is most often given about 6 months after the first one. After you get all three doses, you will be protected for at least 15 years. This vaccine is safe for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

If you are exposed to hepatitis B before you get all three shots, you may need a hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) shot. This gives you instant protection. The HBIG shot will prevent infection until your hepatitis B vaccine takes effect.

The vaccine may cause pain at the injection site. It can also cause a mild fever for a short time. You should not get the hepatitis B vaccine if you are allergic to baker's yeast. This is the kind of yeast used to make bread. And you should not get a second or third dose if you had a bad reaction to the first shot.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve), if your arm is sore after the shot. Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.
- Put ice or a cold pack on the sore area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.

When should you call for help?

Call anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have a seizure.
- You have symptoms of a severe allergic reaction. These may include:
 - Sudden raised, red areas (hives) all over your body.
 - Swelling of the throat, mouth, lips, or tongue.
 - Trouble breathing.
 - Passing out (losing consciousness). Or you may feel very lightheaded or suddenly feel weak, confused, or restless.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have symptoms of an allergic reaction, such as:
 - A rash or hives (raised, red areas on the skin).
 - Itching.
 - Swelling.
 - Belly pain, nausea, or vomiting.
- You have a high fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.

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