

# Hepatitis B vaccine

## Parent Information Sheet

The Australian Government makes some vaccines free under the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

### Q. What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that can cause fever, jaundice, and feeling unwell. It can lead to liver damage (cirrhosis) or liver cancer. Some people may not know they have hepatitis B and can spread it to others.

### Q. How does hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B spreads through:

- birth (from an infected mother to her baby)
- contact with open sores or wounds
- unsafe sex
- needle stick injuries
- tattooing or piercing with unclean equipment
- sharing needles.

### Q. How do vaccines work?

Vaccines help your immune system fight infections. If a vaccinated person gets exposed to these infections, their immune system can fight it better, either preventing the disease developing or making it less severe.

### Q. How effective is the hepatitis B vaccine?

The hepatitis B vaccine gives strong protection against the virus.

### Q. How many doses are needed?

- Children and teenagers aged 10-19 years need 3 child doses or;
- Children and teenagers aged 11-15 years can have 2 adult doses unless they had the vaccine as a baby or child.

### Q. Who should get the vaccine?

All children and teenagers who have not received the full course of the hepatitis B vaccine should be vaccinated.

### Q. Who should not get the vaccine?

Do not give the vaccine to someone who:

- has had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose or an ingredient in the vaccine
- is pregnant.

### Q. How safe are vaccines?

Vaccines in Australia are very safe. They must pass strict safety checks before approval by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). The TGA also monitors vaccine safety after use.

### Q. What is in the hepatitis B vaccine?

The vaccine contains:

- aluminium hydroxide to help it work
- yeast proteins (may be present)
- bovine-derived materials (may be present).

### Q. What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Side effects are usually mild and may include:

- pain, redness, or swelling where the shot was given.

Serious side effects are very rare.

For more information, check the Consumer Medicines Information (CMI) at [health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination](http://health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination). If you are worried about side effects, contact your GP.

### Q. What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a very rare but serious allergic reaction. It can cause unconsciousness or death if not treated quickly. Immunisation providers are trained to manage anaphylaxis.

### Q. What if I don't have records or can't remember if my child had the vaccine?

It is safe for your child to get another course of the hepatitis B vaccine.

**Q. Can pregnant students get the vaccine?**

No. Pregnant students should not get the vaccine.

On vaccination day, nurses will ask female students if they are or could be pregnant. If a student says yes, she will not be vaccinated. She will be advised to talk to her parent or doctor and will be given contact details for a support service.

**Q. Who can give consent, and can it be withdrawn?**

Parents or guardians must give consent for students under 18. Students aged 18 and older can give their own consent by signing the Consent Form.

You can withdraw consent at any time by writing to the school or calling them.

**Q. What if my child missed the vaccine because they were sick or absent?**

If your child missed their vaccination at school, arrange a catch-up as soon as possible. Some schools offer catch-up clinics. If not, the school will provide a letter for your GP or pharmacist to complete the course.

**Q. How can I access a record of my child's vaccinations?**

Your child's vaccination record will be added to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

Parents can request their child's Immunisation History Statement until the child turns 14. Students aged 14 and older can request their own record. You can access it:

- through your Medicare online account at [my.gov.au](https://my.gov.au)
- using the Medicare Express Plus App: [servicesaustralia.gov.au/express-plus-mobile-apps](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/express-plus-mobile-apps)
- by calling the AIR General Enquiries Line at 1800 653 809.

**Q. What happens to my child's information?**

The information on the Consent Form is private and protected by law. It will be added to the NSW Health immunisation register and linked to the AIR so it can be viewed on MyGov.

**Q. Where can I find more information about school vaccination?**

You can find more details:

- on the NSW Health website: [health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination](https://health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination)
- by calling your local public health unit at 1300 066 055.

## Your next steps:

- If you want your child to get the hepatitis B vaccine, complete and sign the Consent Form. Return it to the school with your child.
- If you do not want your child to get the vaccine, do not provide consent.