

Hepatitis B Immunization

The **hepatitis B immunization** is part of the routine Yukon Children's Immunization Schedule, and is also provided to adults that are at high risk. This immunization is the best protection against hepatitis B and its complications.

Hepatitis B (HB) is a liver infection caused by a virus. You can get the virus by direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person. This could include a cut, needle stick, or tattoo; sharing toothbrushes, having unprotected sex or during childbirth it can be passed to the infant if the mother is infected with the HB virus. Half the people who are infected never feel sick and can spread the disease without knowing it.

Hepatitis B can cause:

- Fever
- Abdominal pain
- Jaundice (yellow skin/eyes)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Complications of Hepatitis B may lead to:

- Severe liver disease
- Chronic liver infection (10% of infected adults, and up to 90% of infected infants)
- Permanent liver damage, called cirrhosis
- Liver cancer
- Death (1% of cases)

Why is the Hepatitis B vaccine recommended?

This vaccine is very effective and is provided free to children under 19 years old as part of the Yukon Children's Immunization Program, and to individuals who are high risk.

Possible side effects of the immunization:

Common reactions to the immunization may include redness, tenderness, and swelling at the injection site. Some may develop a fever, headache, dizziness, fatigue, or digestive problems. These are generally mild and last 1-2 days.

Side effects of the immunization are easily relieved by: Applying a cold/damp compress to the injection site, administering acetaminophen or ibuprofen for temperatures 38.5°C or higher. See your health care provider if your symptoms are severe or last longer than 48 hours.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any immunization because there is a rare possibility of developing a severe allergic reaction which is treatable at the clinic. This happens to fewer than 1 in 1 million people. If it happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.

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