

Hepatitis B vaccination

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about having the hepatitis B vaccination if you are a kidney patient. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus and can be passed on by infected blood or bodily fluids.

You can be protected from hepatitis B infection by a vaccine. The hepatitis B vaccine consists of a course of injections which contain an inactive hepatitis B virus.

Why should I be vaccinated?

Anyone needing dialysis or a transplant is at slight risk of getting hepatitis B, as they may be exposed to blood and other bodily fluids during their treatment.

People with kidney impairment are more prone to infection or disease. We therefore recommend that all patients who are on renal replacement programmes (dialysis or renal transplant) should be vaccinated against the hepatitis B virus.

Also people who travel abroad and receive medical treatment while they are outside the UK may be more at risk of picking up the virus, particularly if they have had an operation. This is because surgical procedures abroad may not follow such strict guidelines as in this country.

How will I get the vaccination?

The vaccination can be done at your kidney clinic or you could choose to have the vaccination done locally at your GP surgery. It is recommended to complete the course using the same brand of hepatitis B vaccine and not interchange with another. It is important therefore to complete the whole vaccination course **either** at the kidney clinic or at your GP surgery.

How is the vaccination given?

The vaccination consists of four injections into the muscle of the upper arm given over a six-month period.

The first three doses of the vaccination are given one month apart and the fourth dose is given at six months. Please see the example of dosing time intervals below.

An example of dates of vaccine doses:

Vaccine dose	Date of injection
First injection	6 January
Second injection	6 February
Third injection	6 March
Fourth injection	6 June

It is important to finish the complete course of four injections, if not you may not be fully protected against the disease.

Very occasionally, a different brand of hepatitis B vaccine will be used and the frequency of administration may therefore be different to that outlined above. If so, you will be given information on when the doses need to be given.

When shouldn't I have the vaccination?

If you are unwell and have a temperature, it is best to postpone your vaccination until after the illness. You should also have a gap of at least two weeks between the hepatitis B vaccination and any other vaccine, for example the flu jab. Please let your nurses know of the delay at your next clinic appointment, as it is important to keep as close as possible to the vaccination dates that you have been given. Delays may mean you are not fully protected, and you may need to repeat the course.

Are there any side effects from the vaccination?

Side effects are uncommon. Please refer to the list below for more information:

- Occasional side effects - some people develop soreness and redness at the injection site.
- Rare side effects - some people develop a mild fever and flu-like symptoms days after the injection.
- Very rare side effects – some people may have an allergic reaction. In the event of the appearance of a rash, swelling of the face, or difficulty in swallowing, you should seek emergency medical help.

If you feel unwell after having the vaccine or are concerned about side-effects, please speak to your kidney nurse for further advice.

Will I be protected for life by the vaccination?

Once you have completed the course of vaccines you will have a blood test to check your body has made enough antibodies (chemicals that fight infection) to protect you from hepatitis B virus.

People with reduced kidney function may not produce enough antibodies. If your antibody level is low it is sometimes necessary to repeat the vaccinations to encourage your body to make more antibodies.

The antibodies will be checked yearly after that and an extra dose of vaccine (called a booster) may be given if needed.

If you have any further questions, please ask your nurse or doctor at your next clinic appointment.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the vaccination course please contact your kidney nurse or phone:

t 07867 892759 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Out of hours, please contact your GP.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

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