Hepatitis B Vaccination and Screening of Adults:

Simple Steps to Protect Yourself from Serious Liver Disease

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is an important cause of liver disease and cancer. Anyone who is unvaccinated can be infected by HBV. It can be spread through blood, semen, and other body fluids. Most people recover fully, but up to a million people in the United States have chronic infections that can lead to liver damage or cancer. Many do not know they are infected. Treatment can help.

You can protect your liver from hepatitis B in two simple steps. It doesn't matter which step you take first. You can even do both on the same day.

Step 1

Know your hepatitis B status. Get the triple panel screening test.

- In 2023, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that every adult should have a simple "triple panel" blood test for HBV once in a lifetime, *even if they have been vaccinated for hepatitis B.*
- The triple panel test can detect current or past infection. You may be referred for care.
- If you were vaccinated years ago, the triple panel test result may not show it, but most vaccinated people are still protected from illness and do not need to be vaccinated again.
- If you need vaccination, you do not have to wait for the screening results to get your first dose of hepatitis B vaccine (HepB).
- You may get your blood drawn, then get your first dose of vaccine at the same visit.
- If the screening test is not available, but the vaccine is, get vaccinated now and do the screening test later.
- If you get vaccinated now and screened later, get screened at least a month after vaccination. Screening too soon after vaccination might cause a false test result.
- If your screening test shows you are not infected with HBV, but you are at high risk of becoming infected, you will need to be re-tested from time to time if you do not get vaccinated to prevent infection.

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Step 2

Protect yourself from infection. Not vaccinated? Unsure? Get vaccinated.

- In 2022, CDC recommended HepB vaccination of everyone younger than 60 years old. Likewise, every adult who is 60 or older should be offered vaccination. If you were fully vaccinated in the past, you are unlikely to need vaccination again.
- There are four brands of HepB vaccine for adults. One brand requires two doses and can be finished in 4 weeks. Three brands require 3 doses and can be finished in 6 months.
- If you are already infected with HBV, vaccination will not make your infection better or worse. You still need a screening test to know if you are infected so you can be treated properly.
- Unsure of your vaccination history? HepB vaccine has been recommended for all children and at-risk adults since the 1990s. In general, healthcare providers recommend vaccination if there is no written or electronic record of past vaccination. If you think you were vaccinated, but cannot be sure, it is safest to go ahead with vaccination now.
- Keep a copy of your vaccination record. Taking a digital photo of your record is wise. You can show it to other healthcare providers who ask if you have had HepB vaccination.

Need more information?

Visit the CDC Hepatitis B main page at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/index.htm.

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