

Hepatitis B immune globulin

What is hepatitis B immune globulin?

Hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) provides immediate, short-term protection against hepatitis B infection. HBIG has large amounts of hepatitis B antibodies taken from donated human blood. Antibodies are proteins that a person's immune system makes to fight germs, such as bacteria and viruses like hepatitis B.

HBIG is approved by Health Canada.

Is hepatitis B immune globulin safe?

Yes. HBIG is prepared from donated human blood that has been tested to ensure its safety. All blood donors are screened for exposure to viruses such as HIV and hepatitis. Each blood donation is also tested for the presence of blood-borne viruses before being used to make HBIG. Several steps are included when preparing HBIG to inactivate and remove viruses and bacteria that can cause disease. The final preparation of HBIG undergoes more testing to ensure no known infectious viruses are present. There is an extremely small risk that some blood-borne infections could be passed on through the use of HBIG. However, since blood screening and testing began, there have been no reports of blood-borne infections such as HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C in people who received HBIG.

Who should get hepatitis B immune globulin?

You should get one dose of HBIG if you have been exposed to the hepatitis B virus and are not considered to be immune to the virus. HBIG works best if given as soon as possible after being exposed to the virus, ideally within 48 hours. Depending on the type of exposure, HBIG may be given up to 14 days after the exposure.

HBIG is recommended for the following:

- People exposed to blood known or suspected to be infected with hepatitis B virus by:

- Being poked with a used injection needle
- Being splashed in the mouth, nose or eyes with infected blood
- Being bitten by someone with hepatitis B
- Having contact with household articles, such as a toothbrush, dental floss or a razor contaminated with blood from a person with hepatitis B
- People who have had unprotected sex with a person with hepatitis B
- Survivors of sexual assault
- Newborns and infants less than 12 months of age whose mothers have hepatitis B
- Newborns whose mothers are at high risk of infection with hepatitis B, such as those who inject drugs or are sex trade workers

Depending on your immunization history, you may receive a dose of hepatitis B vaccine when you get HBIG. You may need more doses of hepatitis B vaccine later to provide long-term protection against infection. Speak with your health care provider. For more information, visit [HealthLinkBC File #25a Hepatitis B vaccine](#).

What are the benefits of hepatitis B immune globulin?

HBIG provides immediate, short-term protection against hepatitis B infection. It can prevent illness or make the illness less severe.

What are the possible reactions after hepatitis B immune globulin?

Common reactions to HBIG may include soreness where the immunization was given. Headache, fever, nausea, sore muscles or joints, diarrhea or allergic reactions (hives or swelling) may also occur.

Some immune globulins may be associated with a risk of thrombosis (blood clots) within 24 hours of

receiving them, especially when large volumes are given. The risk of thrombosis is increased in those:

- 45 years of age and older
- With a history of thrombosis
- With risk factors for thrombosis

Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen* (e.g. Advil®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye syndrome.

*Ibuprofen should not be given to children under 6 months of age without first speaking to your health care provider.

For more information on Reye syndrome, visit [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye syndrome](#).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any immunization. There is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This happens in less than 1 in a million people who get immunized. Symptoms may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this reaction occurs, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment includes administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

Always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Who should not get hepatitis B immune globulin?

Speak with your health care provider if you have:

- Had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of any immune globulin or any of its components
- A condition called isolated immunoglobulin A deficiency

- A history of thrombosis or risk factors for thrombosis; or
- Received a measles, mumps, rubella or chickenpox vaccine within the past 14 days

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you have concerns, speak with your health care provider.

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that infects the liver. It can cause serious disease including permanent liver damage (cirrhosis). Hepatitis B is also one of the main causes of liver cancer, which can be fatal. The hepatitis B virus is spread through contact with blood or body fluids from a person infected with the virus.

After the virus enters your body, it usually takes 2 to 3 months to develop symptoms. Symptoms of hepatitis B may include fatigue, fever, nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, dark urine, pale stools and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Many people who get hepatitis B have no symptoms and may not know they have the disease. You can spread the hepatitis B virus to others even if you do not have symptoms.

Mature minor consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Children under the age of 19, who can understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations. For more information on mature minor consent, visit [HealthLinkBC File #119 The Infants Act, mature minor consent and immunization](#).

For more information on immunizations, visit ImmunizeBC at <https://immunizebc.ca>.



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

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