

Vaccination against Hepatitis B

Information for patients on haemodialysis,
relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:
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Contents	Page
What is hepatitis B?	3
Why am I at risk?	3
What can protect me from hepatitis B?	4
How is the vaccination given?	5
How will I know if the vaccine has been effective?	6
Will there be any side effects?	6
Tell us what you think of this leaflet	7
Teaching, training and research.....	7
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).....	7
Leaflets in alternative languages or formats	8

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is an infection caused by the hepatitis B virus. The infection mainly affects the liver. If you are infected the virus is found in your body fluids such as blood and saliva.

An infected person might not show symptoms and in some people the virus remains in the body long term. The people who have this virus long term are known as carriers and can pass the virus to other people. Some carriers can eventually develop serious liver disease.

Why am I at risk?

If you are on haemodialysis, you are at risk of exposure to blood and other body fluids during treatment. This means you are more susceptible to contracting the hepatitis B virus and vaccination is recommended.

What can protect me from hepatitis B?

The renal team take all appropriate precautions when dialysing patients to ensure minimum exposure to any blood borne infection.

The Department of Health and the Renal Association recommend all patients with chronic kidney failure should be vaccinated against the hepatitis B virus. This vaccination encourages the production of antibodies. This prepares your body to fight the virus if it enters your blood stream.

Vaccination against hepatitis B also prevents the disease from spreading and putting other kidney patients at risk.

As soon as you know that you might require dialysis or a kidney transplant, you should be advised to have the hepatitis B vaccine.

How is the vaccination given?

We will make arrangements to administer a course of hepatitis B vaccinations via our community clinics, by our renal specialist nurses or during dialysis treatment depending on what treatment you are receiving.

The vaccine is given as an intramuscular injection into the upper arm. You will need a course of three or four injections over a six month time period. The number of injections you will need will depend on the type of injection you are given.

HBvaxPRO 40 microgram and Engerix B can all be used for patients with chronic kidney failure.

People with chronic kidney failure do not always respond well to the vaccination in terms of producing antibodies to hepatitis B. Because of this you will be given a higher dose than would be sufficient for most people. Always check with the nurse or doctor that you are being given the correct dose when you are having the vaccination.

How will I know if the vaccine has been effective?

The vaccination is only effective if the full course of three or four injections is completed.

Your response to the vaccine can be measured with a blood test to check your post vaccine antibody levels. Some people have good antibody levels and may never require a booster dose of vaccine. In most people antibody levels fall gradually over a period of time and you may be advised to have a booster dose of vaccine to increase or boost your antibody levels.

Sometimes a repeat course of injections is advised. This will only happen if your antibody levels are very low following the first course of vaccinations. We will only recommend a maximum of two full courses of vaccine.

Will there be any side effects?

Hepatitis vaccinations are well tolerated, and the most common reaction is soreness or redness at the site of injection. Other reported reactions include fever, rash, tiredness and flu like symptoms. If you are concerned, please speak to your nurse or doctor.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Renal Pharmacy Team at:

Renal Department, York Hospital, Wigginton Road,
York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 725963 or email
yhs-tr.RenalPharmacy@nhs.net

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email
yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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