



# All Kids Need Hepatitis B Shots!



## What if I can't afford to get my children vaccinated?

Vaccinations may be available for low or no cost for children whose families can't afford them. Call your local or state health department to find out where you can go for free or low-cost vaccinations. Your children's health depends on it.

## And here's a friendly reminder for parents – Everyone needs vaccinations!

- Adults need shots, too. Call your health care provider or local health department to find out what vaccines you need or where to get them. Your children are counting on you to stay healthy.
- More than half of parents don't know how their children got infected with hepatitis B virus.
- A series of shots can prevent this very serious disease.



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## How many people get hepatitis B?

Thanks to the hepatitis B vaccine, the number of new cases each year in the United States has fallen from 300,000 to less than 50,000. However, there are still more than 1.25 million people who carry the virus in their blood, and up to 5,000 hepatitis B-related deaths occur in the United States each year due to liver failure or liver cancer.



## What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease caused by a virus. This virus can enter the bloodstream, attack the liver and cause severe illness. In some cases, the virus can remain in the body for a lifetime and cause ongoing liver damage.

## How do People get infected with hepatitis B?

Lots of ways. Hepatitis B can be spread by:

- Coming in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids. The virus may live outside of the body for weeks on surfaces contaminated with infected blood.
- Sharing toothbrushes, razors, washcloths or needles with an infected person.
- Human bites.
- Unprotected sex with an infected person.
- Ear piercing, body piercing or tattooing with unsterile equipment.
- An infected mother may pass the virus to her infant during childbirth.

## How safe is this vaccine?

The hepatitis B vaccine is very safe. The vaccine is made from a very small part of the hepatitis B virus cell and therefore cannot cause infection. Routine hepatitis B vaccination of U.S. children began in 1991. Since then, the number of new cases of hepatitis B disease among children and adolescents has dropped by more than 95% - and by 75% in all age groups.

## Do all children need hepatitis B shots?

All the major medical groups in the United States agree all **children 0 to 18 years of age need hepatitis B shots** in order to be protected from this disease. Hepatitis B vaccine is given as a series of three shots and babies should get their first dose at birth before they leave the hospital. They should have received all three doses by 6 to 18 months of age. Children and teens through 18 years of age who did not get the hepatitis B shots when they were younger should also be vaccinated.

If you or your child were born in Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, Eastern Europe, the post-Soviet states or South America, where hepatitis B disease is widespread, your doctor may want to test your child at the time of the first vaccination to make sure they haven't already been infected with hepatitis B virus.

This vaccine gives long-term protection from infection, possibly lifelong.

