Hepatitis B immunisation for people with Chronic Kidney Disease

Information for patients
What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a serious inflammation of the liver that is caused by a viral infection. It is spread by contact with blood and body fluids. People who have hepatitis B become long term carriers of the disease; which means they can infect other people with the disease, even if they are well.

Around 1 in 5 people with chronic hepatitis B will develop scarring of the liver over 10-20 years. This is known as cirrhosis. 1 in 10 people who have cirrhosis will develop liver cancer.
Why are people with chronic kidney disease at more risk?

People with chronic kidney disease are at an increased risk of hepatitis B infection because they have more exposure to blood and body fluids during dialysis.

Some countries outside the UK have a higher rate of hepatitis B, so it is particularly important to be immunised if you plan to have haemodialysis abroad.

People who have had a kidney transplant need to take medicines which dampen the immune system (immunosuppressive drugs), which makes it more difficult for their body to fight infection. This can increase the risk of developing hepatitis B infection.

What can be done to protect me from hepatitis B?

The dialysis units have procedures in place to reduce the risk of hepatitis B infection, but it cannot be removed completely.

The Department of Health recommend that people with chronic kidney disease are immunised against the hepatitis B virus. People who will require dialysis or may have a kidney transplant in the future are all offered immunisation; you will not have to pay for it. The vaccine is also safe for people on the kidney transplant waiting list.

Immunisation also prevents the disease spreading and causing risk to other people.
How is the immunisation given?

The treatment involves a course of injections given in your upper arm, over a number of months. The practice nurse at your GP surgery will give you the injections.

There are different injections that can be used and these are listed below. The choice of injection will be decided by your GP.

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<tr>
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<th>HBvaxPRO</th>
<th>Fendrix</th>
<th>Engerix B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dose:</td>
<td>40 micrograms</td>
<td>20 micrograms</td>
<td>40 micrograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of injections:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injection schedule:</td>
<td>• First injection</td>
<td>• First injection</td>
<td>• First injection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 1 month after 1st injection</td>
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<td>• 6 months after 1st injection</td>
<td>• 2 months after 1st injection</td>
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<td>• 6 months after 1st injection</td>
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The doses of the vaccine used in people with chronic kidney disease (see table above) are slightly higher than those used in people without kidney disease.
What happens when I have the vaccine?

The vaccination will encourage your body to produce antibodies to fight the virus if it enters your blood stream. Your kidney doctor or pre-dialysis nurse will organise for you to have a blood test to measure your antibody level, once you have completed the course of injections. For your protection, it is recommended that your antibody level is greater than 100mIU/mL. If the level is between 10 and 100mIU/mL you will still have some protection, but your kidney doctor or pre-dialysis nurse may recommend a further injection.

If you are on haemodialysis, your antibody levels will be measured every year. If the level drops below 100mIU/ml your haemodialysis nurse will advise you to have a booster injection (one injection). Any additional boosters would be given by your GP.

For the immunisation to be the most effective, it is really important that you have the injections at the recommended time and complete the course. Your GP or practice nurse will remind you when your injections are due. You may want to keep your own record of the immunisations.
Does the immunisation have any side effects?

As with any vaccine or drug, you may have a reaction or suffer from side effects. These may include the following:

<table>
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<th>Symptoms</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Common (about 1 in 10 people)</strong></td>
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<td>• Redness, tenderness, pain and swelling at the injection site. This usually only lasts a few days.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Headache</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Uncommon (about 1 in 100 people)</strong></td>
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<td>• Fever or flu-like symptoms</td>
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<td>• Skin rash</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Very rare (less than 1 in 10,000 people)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Severe reaction</td>
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<td>• Swelling of your face with difficulty breathing (this is usually called an anaphylactic reaction)</td>
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</table>

Your practice nurse or GP will discuss these with you.

Who should not have the vaccine?

If you have had a severe reaction to any hepatitis B vaccine you should not have another injection of hepatitis B vaccine. Please tell your kidney doctor if you have had a severe reaction to any vaccine in the past.

If you have a high fever or severe infection, the vaccine should be given after you have recovered. If you have a minor infection, such as cold, this should not be a problem, but talk to your doctor first.

There is no evidence of any risk from vaccinating pregnant or breastfeeding women against hepatitis B.
How can I contact the pre-dialysis nurses?

Oxford: 01865 226 158
Or 01865 225 359
(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

There is an answerphone available, so please leave a message outside these hours and we will call you back.

Wycombe: 01494 426 347

Milton Keynes: 01908 996 989

Swindon: 01793 605 291
(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Renal ward: 01865 225 780
Use this number at the weekend, on bank holidays and in the evenings.

Where can I find more information?

Please speak to your kidney doctor or pre-dialysis nurse.

The NHS Choices website has information on hepatitis B
Website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/Hepatitis-B/Pages/Introduction.aspx

The website of the Oxford Kidney Unit has information about the Oxford Kidney Unit for patients and their relatives.
Website: www.ouh.nhs.uk/OKU
If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221 473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk

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