

Vaccine Information Sheet

ENGERIX-B – Hepatitis B vaccine

What is ENGERIX-B

ENGERIX-B is a vaccine used to help prevent Hepatitis B.

Hepatitis B is a potentially life threatening liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus. While many people clear the virus, in others it can cause chronic liver disease and puts people at high risk of death from liver cirrhosis or cancer.

The hepatitis B virus is spread through contact with blood or some other body fluids such as semen and vaginal secretions of a person with hepatitis B. Contact occurs through unprotected sexual intercourse, by sharing drug-injecting equipment, razors or toothbrushes, through child-to-child transmission (e.g. biting), or from mothers to babies during childbirth. Working in the healthcare field can increase the risk of infection.

Symptoms can show between 45 and 180 days after infection (60-90 days on average) and can include: fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea and/or vomiting, abdominal pain, muscle and joint pain, skin rashes, dark urine and light faeces, and jaundice (yellow colouring of the eyes and skin).

Most people recover from the acute infection but may carry the hepatitis B virus long after recovering from symptoms. Some people develop chronic hepatitis, which can lead to liver failure and cancer. Chronic infection is much more common if infection occurs at a young age; up to 90% of those infected in early infancy will live with a greater risk of developing serious liver disease later in life.

What is in the vaccine and how does it work

The hepatitis B vaccine offers very effective protection against infection with the disease. The vaccine contains inactivated virus and is injected into the body. The body then produces its own protection by making disease-fighting substances (antibodies) to fight the virus. The vaccine itself cannot cause the infection. If a vaccinated person comes into contact with live virus the body is usually ready, and produces antibodies to destroy it. However, as with all vaccines, 100% protection against hepatitis B cannot be guaranteed.

How is it given

ENGERIX-B is given as an IM injection, usually into the upper arm muscle by a doctor or trained nurse. The usual dose for adults is 1.0 ml, it is given as a total of 3 doses over 6 months, each dose is given on a separate visit. The schedule is:

- 1st dose: at elected date
- 2nd dose: 1 month after first injection
- 3rd dose: 6 months after the first injection.

If you are a healthcare worker, your doctor may advise you to have a blood test after you have completed the course of vaccinations to check if you have a satisfactory hepatitis B (antigen) response. If not, your doctor will advise you on the possible need to have extra doses.

Hepatitis B vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Before you are given ENGERIX-B

Anyone who has ever had a severe (life threatening) allergic reaction to a previous dose of hepatitis B vaccine or any vaccine component should not get this vaccine. In particular, hepatitis B vaccines are contraindicated in persons with a history of anaphylaxis to yeast.

ENGERIX-B vaccine components include:

- active ingredient is the surface protein of the hepatitis B virus, derived from genetically engineered yeast cells. The vaccine is not infectious, and will not give you the hepatitis B virus.
- inactive ingredients include aluminium hydroxide, sodium phosphate, sodium chloride, water.

What are the possible side effects of ENGERIX-B

A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of ENGERIX-B causing serious harm is extremely low. Getting Hepatitis B vaccine is much safer than getting the disease.

Adverse events after Hepatitis B vaccination are transient and minor, and include soreness at the injection site (5%), fever (usually low grade; 2–3%), nausea, dizziness, malaise, myalgia and arthralgia.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These would start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

If you feel anything that concerns you after your vaccination, contact your GP or Health Direct on 1800 022 222.

Do not be alarmed by this list of possible side effects. You may not experience any of them.

Use of ENGERIX-B in pregnancy

ENGERIX-B vaccine is not routinely recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women. Please inform your Manager if possible and this can be discussed with the nurse or Doctor prior to your vaccination date.

Completing the course

After you have had your first dose of ENGERIX-B, don't forget to follow-up with your second dose 4 weeks later and your third dose 6 months after the first injection to ensure you have protective immunity to Hepatitis B.

As a precaution after your vaccination, it is recommended that you wait in the vicinity of the immunisation clinic for 15 minutes.

If you have any other questions, you can discuss these with your nurse on the day of vaccination or contact Work Health Professionals on 9204 1999.