

Vaccine Information Sheet

TWINRIX - Combined Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccine

What is TWINRIX

Twinrix is a vaccine used to help prevent Hepatitis A and B.

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the Hepatitis A virus (HAV). HAV is found in the stool of people with hepatitis A. It is usually spread by close personal contact and sometimes by eating food or drinking water containing HAV. A person who has hepatitis A can easily pass the disease to others within the same household. Working in the healthcare field can increase the risk of infection, as can working with untreated sewage.

Hepatitis A can cause: “flu-like” illness; jaundice (yellow skin or eyes, dark urine); severe stomach pains and diarrhoea. People with Hepatitis A often have to be hospitalized (up to about 1 person in 5). Adults with hepatitis A are often too ill to work for up to a month. Sometimes, people die as a result of hepatitis A (about 3–6 deaths per 1,000 cases). Hepatitis A vaccine can prevent hepatitis A.

Hepatitis B is an infectious disease, which affects the liver. The disease is caused by the hepatitis B virus. The virus is found in body fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal secretions, or saliva (spit) of infected people. The hepatitis B virus is generally spread from person to person via the transfer of virus through any perforation in the skin.

Hepatitis B may offer few symptoms, in fact you might be infected with hepatitis B virus (and be spreading the virus) and not know it. If you have symptoms, they might include: yellow skin or yellowing of the white of your eyes (jaundice), tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark urine, clay-coloured bowel movements, joint pain. Hepatitis B vaccination can prevent hepatitis B.

What is in the vaccine and how does it work

TWINRIX contains inactivated hepatitis A virus and hepatitis B virus surface antigen recombinant. The body reacts to the vaccine by producing 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 A and B cannot be guaranteed.

How is it given

Three doses of the vaccine are needed for lasting protection. The 2nd dose should be given after 1 month and the 3rd after 6 months. It is given as an injection, usually into your upper arm muscle. The usual dose for adults (18 years and older) is 1.0 ml. 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.

Before you are given Twinrix

Anyone who has ever had a severe (life threatening) allergic reaction to a previous dose of hepatitis A or B vaccine or any vaccine component should not get this vaccine. TWINRIX contains traces of neomycin so it should not be given to people with known hypersensitivity to neomycin. As the hepatitis B component contains yeast, TWINRIX is contraindicated in persons with a history of anaphylaxis to yeast.

TWINRIX vaccine components include:

- active ingredients are inactivated hepatitis A virus and hepatitis B virus surface antigen recombinant.
- inactive ingredients include aluminium hydroxide, aluminium phosphate, sodium chloride and water for injection. The vaccine also contains traces of amino acids for injection, formaldehyde, neomycin sulphate, yeast and polysorbate 20.

What are the possible side effects of TWINRIX

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

The most common adverse events following administration of TWINRIX are pain or discomfort, redness and swelling at the injection site, tiredness, headache, malaise, nausea, vomiting. Uncommon reactions could include fever, rash, dizziness, upper respiratory tract infection. Most people have minimal or no side effects.

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 have any concerns you after your vaccination, contact your GP or Health Direct on 1800 022 222.

Use of Twinrix in pregnancy

Hepatitis A and B vaccines are not routinely recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women but can be given where vaccination is considered necessary. Please inform your Manager (if possible), or contact us to discuss further, prior to your vaccination date.

After you have had your first dose, don't forget to follow-up with your second dose 1 month and 3rd dose 6 months later to ensure you have protective immunity to Hepatitis A & B.

As a precaution, after your vaccination, it is recommended that you wait in 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.