



Many Adults Underestimate Hepatitis B Virus and Vaccination Benefits

Only 20% of surveyed adults understood that hepatitis B vaccination can prevent the liver virus.

June 2, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

Many Americans underestimate of the consequences of [hepatitis B](#) virus (HBV) or are unaware of the importance of vaccination in preventing adverse health effects, according to a survey by [Dynavax Technologies Corporation](#), a biopharmaceutical company specializing in the development of innovative vaccines.

HBV is highly contagious and can cause liver damage. If left untreated, HBV can lead to chronic liver disease, liver cancer, cirrhosis and even death. However, the [Hepatitis B Perceptions and Insights Survey](#) found that half of Americans are unaware that chronic HBV can cause liver disease or liver cancer.

While there is no cure for HBV, effective vaccination can help prevent the liver infection, but only 20% of surveyed adults were aware of this fact.

Approximately 130 million U.S. adults are unvaccinated for HBV, according to the survey.

In the United States, [HBV vaccination](#) is recommended for infants at birth, unvaccinated children, adults ages 19 to 59 and adults ages 60 and older with risk factors. In fact, HBV vaccination has dramatically reduced the risk of HBV in the United States.

“These findings are an important step in understanding the public’s perception of this incurable disease,” said Chari Cohen, DrPH, MPH, president of the Hepatitis B Foundation, in a news release about the survey. “We must work together to raise awareness of hepatitis B and the importance of prevention through vaccination.”

According to the survey, less than one in three adults understood the dosing options for the vaccine. The HBV vaccine Heplisav-B was approved in 2017 for adults over age 18. Heplisav-B is

given in two doses, one month apart. Two older HBV vaccines, Recombivax HB and Engerix-B, are also available; they require three injections administered over a six-month period. [Go here](#) to read more about HBV prevention.

The survey also found that half of adults did not know that anyone can be at risk for HBV. Indeed, only one in three adults knew that HBV can spread through sharing household hygiene items.

According to Hep's basics on [HBV Transmission and Risk Factors](#), HBV is easily spread via HBV-positive blood, semen or other body fluid. The most common ways HBV is transmitted include:

- Sex with an infected partner;
- Acquired at birth from an infected mother;
- Sharing injection drug equipment (including needles, syringes, cookers, drug-preparation equipment);
- Contact with blood or open sores of an infected person;
- Needlestick or other skin puncture;
- Sharing items such as glucose monitors, razors or toothbrushes with an infected person.

"The results from the Hepatitis B Perceptions and Insights Survey underscore the need for further education about hepatitis B and information about how to prevent it," said Rob Janssen, MD, chief medical officer at Dynavax Technologies. "As we recognize Hepatitis Awareness Month, these findings reinforce our commitment to collaborating with the health care community to educate Americans about the dangers of hepatitis B and its impact on public health."

To read more, click [#Hepatitis B](#) or go to Hep's [Health Basics on Hepatitis B Prevention](#). It reads in part:

Who Should Be Vaccinated Against Hepatitis B

If you do not think you were ever infected with hepatitis B, talk to your health care provider. The vaccine is recommended for:

- Infants within 24 hours of birth;

- All children 18 years old or younger who have not been vaccinated previously;
- Adults ages 19 to 59;
- Adults ages 60 and over with risk factors;
- Sex partners or household contacts of individuals who are HBsAg positive;
- Sexually active people who are not in long-term, mutually monogamous relationships (for example, more than one sex partner during the previous six months);
- Anyone seeking evaluation or treatment for a sexually transmitted infection;
- Men who have sex with men;
- Injection drug users;
- People with hepatitis C virus and other chronic liver diseases;
- People with jobs in which there is a risk of infection (such as emergency medical technicians, doctors and nurses);
- Residents and staff of facilities for developmentally disabled individuals;
- Travelers to regions with moderate or high rates of HBV infection;
- Hemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis patients;
- People living with HIV;
- Anyone receiving care in a correctional setting;
- All other persons seeking protection against HBV.

Other Ways to Prevent Hepatitis B

If you have not been vaccinated against hepatitis B, you can still take steps to prevent HBV infection. These include using a condom or another type of latex barrier while having sex. If you are an injection drug user and share equipment, cleaning your syringes with bleach will not help you avoid hepatitis B. It's always best to use new needles, syringes and other drug-related articles to prevent the risk of HBV infection. Also, don't share items that may have been contaminated with someone else's blood, such as toothbrushes, razors or needles used for body piercing, tattooing or acupuncture. Note that hepatitis B may survive outside the body for up to seven days.