

# Hepatitis B vaccination for students

Fact sheet

## Hepatitis B (HBV)

Hepatitis B (HBV) is a liver infecting virus that causes acute and chronic forms of hepatitis. Chronic hepatitis B can lead to complications such as cirrhosis and liver cancer. Hepatitis B is transmitted through percutaneous and mucosal exposure to infective body fluids. Since HBV is stable on environmental surfaces for at least seven days, indirect inoculation can occur via inanimate objects

All healthcare workers, including students, who have contact with or potential exposure to blood or body fluids should be vaccinated against HBV or supply evidence that they are not susceptible to hepatitis B to their employer or university. See the Queensland Health Guideline for the Vaccination of Healthcare Workers: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/qhpolicy/docs/gdl/qh-gdl-321-9.pdf>

Hepatitis B is a vaccine preventable disease. A standard vaccination schedule for adults involves a course of three vaccinations, given at 0, 1 and 6 months. There is some flexibility regarding the interval between the doses, recommendations contained in the Australian Immunisation Handbook should be followed. In adolescents aged 11–15 years a vaccination schedule of two doses is frequently used.

Post vaccination serological testing is recommended for healthcare workers (including students), this should occur 4–8 weeks after completion of the primary course but should also be undertaken in healthcare workers who have previously been vaccinated but were not tested during the 4–8 week timeframe.

## Immunisation and infection control requirements for students

Queensland Health may restrict or deny access to their facilities to a student who does not meet the immunisation and infection control requirements.

All students need to have completed the full course of hepatitis B vaccination before starting a clinical placement. You will need to provide evidence of this or proof that you are not susceptible to hepatitis B.

Evidence includes one of the following:

- vaccine record book with details of vaccine given and clinic attended
- a pathology testing result showing a positive anti-HBs or HBsAb (greater than or equal to 10IU/L)
- a letter from a medical officer, infection control practitioner, occupational health department or vaccine service provider with details of vaccination given or a statement that the individual is not susceptible to hepatitis B.

## Some additional information relevant to students

As you have read the Student Deed and Orientation website you will understand the requirement to have satisfied the 'Immunisation and Infection Control Declaration' for hepatitis B vaccination.

It is recognised that some students are required to start their placements either immediately or within a short period of commencing their studies. If you are unable to meet the hepatitis B vaccination requirement prior to your first attendance at a Queensland Hospital and Health Service facility, you must seek medical advice to discuss the appropriateness of receiving an accelerated schedule of hepatitis B vaccination.

If you are deemed a non-responder after the initial course of hepatitis B vaccination you must see an infectious diseases physician or general practitioner to discuss risks and options prior to the undertaking of your study/placement/supervision program in a Queensland Hospital and Health Service facility.

- You should also contact the Infection Control Practitioner who is responsible for the facility that you wish to attend as facilities may have restrictions on areas that non-immune staff can work. You can do this by calling the main hospital number and requesting the infection control unit

## **Students who have hepatitis B and do not want to disclose their status**

If you are hepatitis B antigen positive you do not have to disclose your hepatitis B status unless you perform exposure prone procedures (see the Guideline for the Management of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B Virus, and Hepatitis C Virus Infected Healthcare Workers, available from:

[www.health.qld.gov.au/chrisp/ic\\_guidelines/index\\_guidelines.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/chrisp/ic_guidelines/index_guidelines.asp)).

In order to satisfy employment requirements of Queensland Health or to attend a student placement you are able to provide proof that you are not susceptible to hepatitis B. This could be provided in the form of a letter from a medical practitioner that states that you are not susceptible to hepatitis B. This statement could also be used by staff/students that have evidence of immunity after a course of hepatitis B vaccination.

### **References**

1. Heymann D. Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 19th edition. United States: American Public Health Association; 2008.
2. Queensland. Health Guideline for Vaccination of Healthcare Workers. Version 2. 2012
3. Australia. Department of Health and Ageing. The Australian Immunisation Handbook. 10th Edition. 2013