



Hepatitis B Vaccination FAQ

I've received the Hepatitis B vaccine series in the past but can't find my documentation. What should I do?

If you are at-risk for occupational exposure to Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) and you cannot provide documentation of receiving 3 doses of the hepatitis B vaccine in the past, we recommend that you undergo both repeat vaccination with the complete 3-dose vaccination series and post-vaccination titer testing 4-8 weeks after the third dose of Hepatitis B vaccine.

Is it safe for me to receive "extra" vaccine doses if I am unsure of my history?

There is no harm in receiving extra doses of vaccine. These vaccinations will help ensure that you are protected from the risk of contracting Hepatitis B following an exposure. While you may choose to decline repeat vaccination by signing Section II on the Hepatitis B Vaccine Declaration Form, we recommend vaccination if you are unsure. Documentation of both your vaccine dates and post-vaccination titer result will be maintained in your confidential medical record at Stanford University Occupational Health Center (SUOHC).

Can't you just check my titer to verify that I'm immune to HBV?

Although a positive Hepatitis B antibody (anti-HBs) titer indicates that you were immune at the time you were tested, this result does not accurately reflect long-term immunity. Long-term immunity has been shown only for persons attaining an adequate anti-HBs titer result (≥ 10 mIU/mL) 1-2 months after completing a 3-dose vaccination series.

The CDC does not recommend using a positive anti-HBs titer as verification of immunity for an individual who cannot provide documentation of receiving 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine in the past. For individuals without documentation of previous vaccination, ACIP recommends following the procedure outlined above.

When and how often should serologic testing be performed for those who have received hepatitis B vaccine series?

Post-vaccination testing (anti-HBs) should only be done 1-2 months after the last dose of hepatitis B vaccine. If adequate anti-HBs (≥ 10 mIU/mL) is present, then no further testing needs to be done. Studies indicate that immunologic memory remains intact for more than 25 years and confers protection against HBV infection even though anti-HBs levels might become low or decline below detectable levels over time.

As a result, SUOHC will only check an individual's titer on the following occasions:

- 1-2 months following the last dose of the hepatitis B vaccine series.
- Following occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious material.
- Periodically for immunocompromised individuals who continue to have an occupational risk for exposure to HBV.



I've completed hepatitis B vaccination in the past and can provide documentation of all three doses. However, I never underwent serologic testing to document my immunity to HBV.

Should I have a titer checked now?

If you have written documentation of a full hepatitis B vaccine series, ACIP/CDC does not recommend checking a titer at this point. If you ever have an exposure to blood or other potentially infectious material, your titer will be checked at that time and appropriate management will be provided depending on your titer result.

If I received only 1 or 2 doses of hepatitis B vaccine in the past (and can provide documentation of these), do I need to restart the entire series now?

No. The hepatitis B vaccine series can be continued from where it was stopped. Further vaccination will be provided to ensure at least 16 weeks between the first and third vaccine doses and at least 8 weeks between the second and third vaccine doses.

What happens if my postvaccination anti-HBs titer is negative (i.e., I did not develop immunity to HBV from vaccination)?

If your post-vaccination titer is less than 10 mIU/mL, CDC recommends repeating the vaccination series and rechecking your titer 4-8 weeks following completion of this second series. If your titer is still negative after the second vaccine series, you will be considered a non-responder to hepatitis B vaccination. You will then undergo a blood test to determine if you have chronic HBV infection. If this is negative, then you will be considered to be susceptible to HBV infection if exposed.

I was born in Asia, the Pacific Islands, Africa, or another region with high endemicity of HBV infection. Should I be tested for previous or chronic infection prior to receiving hepatitis B vaccination?

Persons in the Stanford University BBP Program who wish to be vaccinated with hepatitis B vaccine and who were born in countries with high or intermediate endemicity of HBV infection will be checked for serologic evidence of natural immunity (from previous HBV infection) or of chronic HBV infection at the time of administration of the first vaccine dose. If your titer reveals evidence of natural immunity, no further vaccination will be indicated. If your titer reveals evidence of chronic HBV infection, you will be informed of the results and referred to your primary care provider for further evaluation and management.

If I do not respond to hepatitis B vaccination, can I still participate in patient care or research work performing activities that potentially expose me to HBV?

Yes. If you are susceptible to HBV and experience an exposure to blood or other potentially infectious material at work, prompt medical evaluation and receipt of Hepatitis B Immune Globulin (HBIG) can protect you from development of infection with HBV.