

Renal Department

Hepatitis B: Carer information

This information is for relatives and carers who are involved in helping patients undertake self care haemodialysis either in the patient's haemodialysis unit or at home.

Renal Association Guidelines recommend that patients who require haemodialysis should be immunised against Hepatitis B. In addition, nurses who are involved in caring for patients undergoing haemodialysis are immunised against Hepatitis B.

As you are involved in the care of a patient who is receiving haemodialysis, it is recommended that you undergo a course of Hepatitis B vaccinations.

The hepatitis B vaccine is very effective in preventing infection if you could be at risk from a possible source of infection (for example blood from used dialysis lines or used fistula needles) and you are not immunised.

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a disease caused by the hepatitis B virus. The disease mainly affects the liver. However, if you are infected the virus is present in body fluids such as blood, saliva, semen and vaginal fluid. In the UK it is estimated that about 1 in 1000 people are infected with the hepatitis B virus. It is much more common in other countries - these include sub-Saharan Africa, most of Asia and the Pacific Islands.

If you are infected with the hepatitis B virus, the initial symptoms can range from no symptoms at all to a severe illness. After this 'acute phase', in a number of cases the virus remains in the body long-term. These people are called 'carriers'. Some carriers do not have any symptoms but can still pass on the virus to other people. About 1 in 4 carriers eventually develop



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a serious liver disease such as chronic hepatitis, cirrhosis, and in some cases liver cancer develops after a number of years.

Some people are classed as 'non-responders to the vaccine, a vaccine would have no effect no matter how many vaccines they receive.

How is Hepatitis B passed on?

The hepatitis B virus is passed from person to person as a result of:

- Blood to blood contact, for example, inserting fistula needles or clearing away blood lines
- Having unprotected sex with an infected person
- From an infected mother passing it to her baby
- A human bite from an infected person

The immunisation schedule

Your GP or Practice Nurse will let you know the schedule for your vaccination programme and plan your appointments so that you can receive your vaccinations.

Your GP will also decide if your titre levels need checking or if you require a booster vaccination. A titre test measures the presence and amount of antibodies in the blood.

Further Information

Hepatitis B Foundation UK
The Great Barn
Gommersham Park
Canterbury
Kent
CT4 7DT
Telephone: 01227 738279
Website: www.hepb.org.uk

Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact the department on 024 7696 7777 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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