

Bulletin No. 17
April 21, 1997
Hepatitis B Immunization Program
Expanded to 12 - Year Olds**Background**

Since Alaska initiated a Universal Infant Hepatitis B Immunization Program in the spring of 1993, the program has been extremely effective in reducing the threat of hepatitis B among the state's infant population.

Hepatitis B vaccine will now also be provided to all children who are twelve (12) years of age. Hepatitis B vaccine will be provided free of charge by the Alaska Immunization Program for:

- All newborns and infants 12 months of age or younger;
- adolescents who are 12 years of age.
 - If a child **begins** the series at twelve years of age, the series may be completed at an older age.
 - Check *Epidemiology Bulletin No. 18, April 22, 1997*, for other vaccines that are available for adolescents.

Vaccine Dosage & Administration

Currently, the Alaska Immunization Program supplies Merck & Co., Inc.'s *Recombivax*[®] hepatitis B vaccine in the Adolescent/High Risk Infant formulation (yellow cap bottle). Dosage for children using this formulation is 5 mcg (0.5 mL). The immunization is provided in a series of three (3) intramuscular injections according to the following schedule:

**Recommended Immunization
Schedule for
Hepatitis B Vaccine**

Dose	Recommended Schedule
1	at elected date
2	1 month later
3	6 months after dose #1

Vaccine Effectiveness & Adverse Events

Hepatitis B vaccine has been shown to be 80-95% effective in preventing hepatitis B infection and clinical hepatitis among susceptible children and adults.¹

Only minor, transient side effects have been associated with the vaccine; these include pain at the injection site and low grade fever.

Booster Doses

Long term studies of healthy adults and children indicate that immunologic memory against hepatitis B virus infection remains for *at least* 10 years and confers protection against acute infection even though antibody levels may drop below detectable levels.

Booster doses of hepatitis B vaccine are not routinely recommended at this time.

Postvaccination testing for a serologic response is not necessary after routine vaccination of infants, children, or adolescents.

Interrupted Schedule

Regardless of the interval which may have occurred between doses of hepatitis B vaccine, there is no need to re-start the series. However, if the vaccination series is interrupted after the first or second dose, the next dose should be administered as soon as possible after it is due, in order to provide earlier protection. The second and third doses must be separated by a minimum interval of 2 months, with a 5 month separation being optimal.

Contraindications

The only absolute contraindication to receipt of hepatitis B vaccine is hypersensitivity to yeast or any component of the vaccine.

**Questions?
Contact the Alaska Immunization Program
(907) 269 - 8000**

Reference:

1. CDC. *Hepatitis B virus: a comprehensive strategy for eliminating transmission in the United States through universal childhood vaccination.* MMWR 1991; 40: 1-17.

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