

Hepatitis B vaccination is extremely important for renal patients

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a viral disease that affects the liver and is spread through bodily fluids such as blood. A person who is dependent on dialysis may be exposed to blood and bodily fluids during their treatment and may be at risk of exposure to Hepatitis B.

How can I protect myself from Hepatitis B?

To ensure that you get the best protection against Hepatitis B, the Department of Health recommends that all patients with chronic kidney disease are vaccinated against it. Vaccination encourages the production of antibodies, so that your body is prepared to fight the virus if it enters your blood stream. Vaccination also stops the disease from spreading.

Why do I need to be vaccinated?

Before starting dialysis we recommend vaccination against Hepatitis B. This is because dialysis, especially haemodialysis, involves blood which means there is a risk of exposure to the virus. All patients, including those receiving peritoneal dialysis are vaccinated against Hepatitis B.

Being immune to Hepatitis B also allows you to have greater freedom to dialyse abroad should you wish.

How is the Hepatitis B vaccine given?

A course of three injections into your upper arm is given over a period of three months. The vaccine is only effective if you have all three injections. Your antibody levels will be measured 8-12 weeks after completing the course. You will then be advised if you need further doses of the vaccine.

What if I need to start dialysis immediately?

Don't worry if you need to start dialysis before you have completed the course of injections, you can still start dialysis. However, you must complete the course of injections.

Are there any side effects to the vaccine?

The most common side effects are:

- tenderness
- redness
- swelling

at the injection site, but these should only last a few days.

Other side effects you may experience for a short time after receiving an injection include:

- headache
- tiredness
- a high temperature
- stomach ache.

Contact us

If you have any queries or need further information, please contact:

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If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690