

HEPATITIS B VACCINE

WHAT IS THE VACCINE?

The Hepatitis B vaccine helps the body to produce antibodies that protect you from getting the disease called Hepatitis B. This vaccine is given by a needle in the upper arm.

WHEN IS THE VACCINE NECESSARY?

The Hepatitis B vaccine is a good idea if:

- (a) you have a sexual partner who is a Hepatitis B carrier
- (b) you or your partner has had more than one sexual partner in the past six months
- (c) you are an injection drug user or use other drug paraphernalia
- (d) you have had a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) in the past or have one now

If someone has a sex partner who is a carrier or has shared unclean needles, it would be a good idea to take a blood test. The test will show if a person is *immune*, *susceptible* or a *carrier of Hepatitis B*.

- (a) If the blood test shows you are *susceptible*, that means you never had Hepatitis B and would benefit from Hepatitis B vaccination.
- (b) If the result says you are *immune*, it means you have had the Hepatitis B vaccine or you have had the disease in the past. The vaccine is not necessary.
- (c) If it shows that you are a *carrier*, this means you can pass the Hepatitis B virus to others by sexual contact or blood exposure. Hepatitis B vaccine should be given to your sexual partners and household contacts for their protection; however, the vaccine will not help a person who is a carrier.

HOW OFTEN IS THE VACCINE REQUIRED?

Three (3) doses of the vaccine, given at 0, 1 and 6 months, are needed to provide immunity.

(please turn over)

ARE THERE REASONS TO NOT RECEIVE THE VACCINE?

You should **not** have the vaccine if you are:

- sensitive to any component of the vaccine -- yeast, thimerosal (contact lens solution), mercury or aluminium, formaldehyde (pressed wood, fabrics) or 2 phenoxyethanol (perfumes and aerosol products)
- currently ill with high fever, respiratory infection or contagious disease
- taking medication that affects your immune system
- already a carrier of the Hepatitis B virus

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

Most common: Soreness in the upper arm at site of injection which usually goes away within a few days.

Uncommon: Fever, headache, nausea, dizziness, rash, fatigue and flu-like symptoms.

Extremely rare: Severe allergic reactions. **Immediate medical care is needed if you develop hives, wheezing, breathing difficulty or swelling of the face or mouth.**

Remember to get immediate medical help if you have a serious reaction. Once you are better, call the clinic and/or your family doctor to tell them of your reaction. This will help your doctor to keep a record of the reaction.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Call the AIDS and Sexual Health Info Line at 416-392-2437
or go to
www.toronto.ca/health

SAFER SEX

To reduce your risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI), use a condom every time you have genital contact, vaginal, anal or oral sex.