

# State-Funded Hepatitis B Vaccine for High Risk Groups in Tasmania

## Information for Health Professionals

### Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) can be transmitted during birth, during sex and through blood-to-blood contact.

A Tasmanian Government funded targeted community-focused hepatitis B immunisation program exists to provide free vaccine for population groups that are most at risk of acute hepatitis infection.

### Who can receive the funded hepatitis B vaccine?

In Tasmania funded hepatitis B vaccine is available for people who are at increased risk of acquiring HBV and includes:

- household contacts of people with HBV;
- sexual contacts of people with HBV;
- men who have sex with men;
- sex workers;
- people who have HIV infection;
- people who have hepatitis C infection;
- people who inject drugs;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- inmates of correctional facilities;
- migrants from high endemic HBV regions (see below).

### Which countries have high endemic HBV?

Tasmanians from the following regions, with higher than average endemic HBV, are eligible for free vaccine:

- Sub-Saharan Africa;
- The Amazon Basin;
- Pacific Island countries;
- Parts of Central Asia and the Middle East;
- East and South East Asia (excluding Japan).

These regions reflect a combination of patterns of movement to Tasmania and the World Health Organisation classification of high endemic HBV.

People from high endemic HBV regions should undergo serological testing for carriage and prior infection/immunity before receiving the vaccine.

### Which hepatitis B immunisation schedule should be used?

All funded increased risk groups should receive immunisation with the standard 3-dose schedule described in [The Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) (<https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/>)

## How do providers order hepatitis B vaccine for high risk groups?

To order the vaccine you must have an account with the Communicable Diseases Prevention Unit (CDPU) in the Department of Health. If you already receive government funded vaccine, then you can order the vaccine using your existing account number.

If you wish to provide vaccines for the first time as part of this program then you can apply for an account by contacting CDPU through email to [vaccineorder@health.tas.gov.au](mailto:vaccineorder@health.tas.gov.au) or telephone 1800 671 738.

## How do providers report adverse reactions?

Report any unexpected or significant adverse reactions to the Therapeutic Goods Administration:  
<https://www.tga.gov.au/reporting-problems>

## Other Hepatitis B immunisation recommendations:

Immunisation is also recommended, but is not funded through this program for:

- travellers to HBV endemic regions;
- people who are exposed to blood through their job;
- people at risk of more severe hepatitis and/or who have historically been at risk of iatrogenic infection including those with chronic liver disease, adults undergoing or anticipating haemodialysis, transplant recipients, immunocompromised persons, blood product recipients, and persons with developmental delays. People in these groups will typically have already been immunised through their primary or specialist provider.

Other elective and occupational hepatitis B immunisation should also continue in accordance with existing processes.

The National Immunisation Program provides free hepatitis B vaccine to:

- infants at birth then at two, four and six months of age (can be given as early as six weeks);
- people aged less than 20 years who missed any of their childhood HBV vaccines;
- refugees and humanitarian entrants 20 years and older.

## More information?

Call the Public Health Hotline – Tasmania on **1800 671 738** to speak to a Clinical Nurse Consultant.

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