

*Lots of people can get these vaccines for free through Public Health.*

*You may qualify for free vaccination.*



# Hepatitis A&B

IN NOVA SCOTIA

## What is Hepatitis A and B? Is there a vaccine?

Hepatitis (Hep) A and B are serious liver diseases caused by the hepatitis A and B viruses. Hep A is usually spread through contact with infected feces, including through oral-anal sexual activity and contaminated food and drink. Hep B is spread through blood and body fluids including vaginal fluids, semen, breast milk, and saliva of individuals carrying the infection.

Hep A and B can be vaccinated separately (ex: Havrix, Engerix B) or together in a combined vaccine (Twinrix). Both kinds take several injections over a period of 6 months.

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## Who can access these vaccines?

Anyone can access these vaccines if they are willing to pay for them. In fact, Twinrix is primarily advertised as a travel vaccine. However, there are many populations who may access these vaccines for free through Nova Scotia Public Health.

HIV+ people, men who have sex with men (MSM), illicit drug users, and folks who participate in risky sexual practices (for example, sex work) can all access the combination vaccine (Twinrix) for free through Public Health. A child 6 months - 2 years old living in the same household as people in these categories are also eligible.

 **cbrc**  
Community-Based Research Centre



Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC) promotes the health of gay men through research and intervention development. We are inclusive of bisexual and queer men (cis and trans) and Two Spirit people. [www.cbrc.net](http://www.cbrc.net)

Sexual Health Nova Scotia (SHNS) represents the provincial network of community-based sexual health centres. We work together to champion positive sexual health throughout the lifespan for all in Nova Scotia. <https://shns.ca/>



Hep B vaccines are a recommended school age vaccine. This program started in 1985 in some provinces, and in 1995 in Nova Scotia. Currently, the vaccine for Hep B is given in grade 7. You can contact your Public Health departments to see if you've already been vaccinated.

## How do I get vaccinated?

Doctors, nurse practitioners, and some pharmacists can prescribe these vaccines (if you are not looking for public funding). Once prescribed, the vaccine can either be injected at the pharmacy by a trained pharmacist, or it can be picked up from the pharmacy and brought back to your provider for injection. A pharmacy may charge prescription and/or injection fees in addition to the cost of the vaccine.

Hep A and B vaccines require three injections over 6 months. The first dose is given on Visit 1. The second dose (Visit 2) is given two months from Visit 1. The third dose (Visit 3) is given six months from Visit 1/four months from Visit 2.

Publicly funded vaccines must all be prescribed by a doctor or nurse and be requested through Public Health. Your provider must fill out a "Requisition for Publicly Funded Vaccine" form. These can be found on the Nova Scotia Health Authority website ([www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)) under "Immunization Forms". There is a different form depending on which area of the province you are living in. Once that has been ordered and has arrived at your clinic, you will need to return for your injections.

If you don't have a provider, the Halifax Sexual Health Centre is able to prescribe and administer these vaccines.

## How do I talk to my doctor/nurse about it?

Your provider may not know that this vaccine is publicly funded for your population or how to order it. They also may not know that you fit into a publicly funded category if you have not discussed your sexual activity and/or drug use with them.

When approaching your provider, be prepared with where and how to



access the "Requisition for Publicly Funded Vaccine" form.

If your provider needs to take a history on you, they may ask questions like:

- "How often do you use condoms?"
- "How many sexual partners have you had in the past year?"
- "Do you use IV drugs?", etc.

It's important that you answer these questions honestly, so your risk factors can be properly assessed. This information is confidential and is asked to keep you healthy, not to judge.

## Where can I get more information?

**HALIFAX SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE**  
707 Bayers Rd, Suite 302  
Halifax, NS  
hshc.ca  
902-455-9656

**DARTMOUTH PUBLIC HEALTH**  
7 Mellor Ave, Unit 5  
Dartmouth, NS  
Canada  
Phone: (800) 430-9557, (902) 481-5800

**NOVA SCOTIA HEALTH AUTHORITY**  
[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)