HEPATITIS B
Immunization & Serology

Hepatitis B Immunization:
Hepatitis B is a vaccine preventable infection. Students in health professional programs must be protected with a series of Hepatitis B vaccinations unless they are known to have chronic Hepatitis B infection or are immune due to naturally acquired infection. Recommended immunization schedules can be found at the following link: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-4-active-vaccines/page-7-hepatitis-b-vaccine.html#tab3

Hepatitis B Serology:
Post-immunization serologic testing for immunity (anti-HBs = Hepatitis B surface antibody) is required for health care workers and child care workers. This test must be conducted at least 28 days after completion of the Hepatitis B primary vaccination series (ideally 1-6 months). Note as of Oct 1, 2017 for students entering Postgraduate Medicine programs, and as of Sep 1, 2018 for students entering other health professional programs, positive anti-HBs serology will no longer be accepted if vaccination records are missing or incomplete.

Risk of infection with Hepatitis B:
Students without proof of immunity due to natural infection (positive anti-HBs and positive anti-HBc), or due to immunization (documented vaccination series and positive anti-HBs), are considered susceptible to infection. Hepatitis B is spread through contact with infected blood and body fluids, including semen and vaginal fluid, and is far more infectious than HIV. The risk of infection in the clinical setting can be greatly reduced by putting in place proper infection control practices.

FAQ:
What if a complete vaccination series and positive anti-HBs are documented? You are considered immune. Booster doses of vaccine and repeat serology are not recommended.

What if the anti-HBs serology is positive but my immunization records are missing or incomplete? You are considered susceptible to infection. You should complete a fully documented vaccination series plus repeat anti-HBs serology after the series is completed. All previous doses of vaccine count towards the total. Note this will be mandatory for students entering health professional programs (except Postgraduate Medicine) as of Sep 1, 2018.

What if the anti-HBs serology is not immune after one documented vaccination series? If the series was completed more than six months ago, you need ONE booster plus repeat anti-HBs serology one month later. If not immune after the first booster, you need TWO additional boosters spaced five months apart plus repeat anti-HBs serology one month after the third booster. If the series was completed between one and six months ago, you need a second series (three doses given at 0, 1, 6 months) plus repeat anti-HBs serology one month after completion of the second series.

What if the anti-HBs serology is not immune after two documented vaccination series? You are considered a vaccine non-responder and are unlikely to benefit from further immunizations. Repeat serology is not required. It is possible that a person who does not respond to the vaccine may already be infected with Hepatitis B, therefore testing for HBsAg (Hepatitis B surface antigen) is recommended.

What if Hepatitis B immunizations and serology have not been completed when the Health Screening Record is submitted? Students in all programs must complete as much as possible before their program starts. Currently students are cleared for clinical activities if the anti-HBs serology is positive (with or without documented immunizations). Otherwise, (except for Postgraduate Medicine students) students will be granted provisional clearance after documenting two vaccines, which means they may attend clinical activities while they are in the process of completing the full requirement. The provisional clearance will be revoked if the requirement is not completed by the deadline dates given. Note clinical activities include clinical skills sessions with fellow students or standardized patients.

Click on the links below for more information:
Faculty of Health Sciences Blood Borne Viruses Information
Public Health Ontario Routine Practices Fact Sheet
Public Health Agency of Canada Hepatitis B Get the Facts

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