Hepatitis B vaccine

**GENERIC AND PROPRIETARY NAMES**
- Engerix-B.
- HBVaxPro.
- Combined hepatitis A and B vaccines.

**ACTION**
- Contains inactivated hepatitis B virus surface antigen and works by provoking the immune response.

**CLASSIFICATION**
- Vaccines and antisera.

**INDICATIONS**
- Those who may be exposed to blood or blood products at work such as health care workers.
- Abusers of injectable drugs.
- People with a number of sexual partners.
- Homosexual men.
- Haemodialysis patients or those receiving certain blood products.
- People with chronic liver disease or hepatitis C.
- People in close contact with a hepatitis B carrier or with an infected person.
- Staff and residents of homes.
- Inmates and staff in prisons.
- Travellers intending to stay for long periods in areas where the hepatitis B incidence is high.

**CONTRAINDICATIONS**
- Known hypersensitivity to any components of the vaccine, or to a previous dose.
- Acute febrile illness.

**INTERACTIONS**
- The immune response can be compromised by administration of high-dose steroids.

**SIDE-EFFECTS**
- Headache.
- Rash.
- Fatigue.
- Cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Fever (pyrexia).
- Pins and needles (paraesthesia).
- Dizziness.
- Pain in the joints (arthralgia).
- Itching (pruritis).
- Soreness at injection site.
- Allergic reactions such as lips swelling, tongue and throat (angioedema) or narrowing of the airways (bronchospasm).

**ADMINISTRATION**
- Vaccination consists of a course of three injections over a three-month period.
- An accelerated schedule can be used where appropriate.
- It is good practice to continue a course with the same brand of vaccine. Vaccines may be used interchangeably if necessary.
- It is unnecessary to repeat doses if the course has been interrupted. Longer than recommended intervals between doses do not appear to reduce the final antibody level or efficacy.
- The deltoid muscle is the preferred injection site for adults and older children and the anterolateral thigh for neonates and young children. Use of the buttock reduces vaccine efficacy.

**PATIENT TEACHING**
- Hepatitis B vaccine does not protect against hepatitis caused by other agents or viruses.
- Universal precautions should always be maintained.

**REFERENCES**
- NaTHNaC (2005) Hepatitis B Vaccine Information. Available at: www.nathnac.org/pro/factsheets/hep_b_vaccine.htm