

Hepatitis B Vaccine May Work Better After Hepatitis C Cure

Nearly 70% of prior HBV vaccine nonresponders produced adequate antibodies after successful HCV treatment.

November 6, 2023 By Sukanya Charuchandra

People successfully treated for [hepatitis C virus \(HCV\)](#) infection who have a past history of [hepatitis B virus \(HBV\)](#) vaccine failure are more responsive to another round of vaccination, according to study findings were published in the [Journal of Infectious Diseases](#).

With their immune system thrown into disarray, people with hepatitis C may not respond as well to vaccination compared with the general population. But recent research suggests that successful HCV treatment can help the immune system recover.

Jose Debes, MD, PhD, of the University of Minnesota, and colleagues wanted to see whether people who are successfully treated with [direct-acting antiviral therapy](#) for HCV would respond better to a second attempt at HBV vaccination.

For the study, the researchers recruited 34 previous HBV vaccine nonresponders after they achieved a sustained virological response to HCV treatment, which is considered a cure. One month after vaccination was completed, they tested participants for hepatitis B surface antibodies, a measure of vaccination response.

Of the 34 enrollees, 31 people were tested for hepatitis B surface antibodies; 21 of them (68%) showed positive results. Eight people (26%) remained nonreactive and two had indeterminate test results. Vaccine responsiveness was similar irrespective of age, sex, race/ethnicity, HIV status and extent of liver fibrosis.

HBV vaccination is highly effective for people who have not had hepatitis C. Some 90% of vaccinated people produce adequate hepatitis B surface antibodies. Even though just 68% of people in this study population responded to repeat HBV vaccination, the researchers maintained that this is a big improvement compared with their previous lack of response.

“HBV vaccine nonresponders should be considered for revaccination following HCV cure,” the study authors wrote.

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