

Hepatitis A Vaccine

What You Need to Know

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See www.immunize.org/vis

Hojas de información sobre vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite www.immunize.org/vis

1 Why get vaccinated?

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease. It is caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). HAV is spread from person to person through contact with the feces (stool) of people who are infected, which can easily happen if someone does not wash his or her hands properly. You can also get hepatitis A from food, water, or objects contaminated with HAV.

Symptoms of hepatitis A can include:

- fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, and/or joint pain
- severe stomach pains and diarrhea (mainly in children), or
- jaundice (yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements).

These symptoms usually appear 2 to 6 weeks after exposure and usually last less than 2 months, although some people can be ill for as long as 6 months. If you have hepatitis A you may be too ill to work.

Children often do not have symptoms, but most adults do. You can spread HAV without having symptoms.

Hepatitis A can cause liver failure and death, although this is rare and occurs more commonly in persons 50 years of age or older and persons with other liver diseases, such as hepatitis B or C.

Hepatitis A vaccine can prevent hepatitis A. Hepatitis A vaccines were recommended in the United States beginning in 1996. Since then, the number of cases reported each year in the U.S. has dropped from around 31,000 cases to fewer than 1,500 cases.

2 Hepatitis A vaccine

Hepatitis A vaccine is an inactivated (killed) vaccine. You will need **2 doses** for long-lasting protection. These doses should be given at least 6 months apart.

Children are routinely vaccinated between their first and second birthdays (12 through 23 months of age). Older children and adolescents can get the vaccine after 23 months. Adults who have not been vaccinated previously and want to be protected against hepatitis A can also get the vaccine.

You should get hepatitis A vaccine if you:

- are traveling to countries where hepatitis A is common,
- are a man who has sex with other men,
- use illegal drugs,
- have a chronic liver disease such as hepatitis B or hepatitis C,
- are being treated with clotting-factor concentrates,
- work with hepatitis A-infected animals or in a hepatitis A research laboratory, or
- expect to have close personal contact with an international adoptee from a country where hepatitis A is common

Ask your healthcare provider if you want more information about any of these groups.

There are no known risks to getting hepatitis A vaccine at the same time as other vaccines.

3 Some people should not get this vaccine

Tell the person who is giving you the vaccine:

- **If you have any severe, life-threatening allergies.** If you ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of hepatitis A vaccine, or have a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine, you may be advised not to get vaccinated. Ask your health care provider if you want information about vaccine components.
- **If you are not feeling well.** If you have a mild illness, such as a cold, you can probably get the vaccine today. If you are moderately or severely ill, you should probably wait until you recover. Your doctor can advise you.



4 Risks of a vaccine reaction

With any medicine, including vaccines, there is a chance of side effects. These are usually mild and go away on their own, but serious reactions are also possible.

Most people who get hepatitis A vaccine do not have any problems with it.

Minor problems following hepatitis A vaccine include:

- soreness or redness where the shot was given
- low-grade fever
- headache
- tiredness

If these problems occur, they usually begin soon after the shot and last 1 or 2 days.

Your doctor can tell you more about these reactions.

Other problems that could happen after this vaccine:

- People sometimes faint after a medical procedure, including vaccination. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent fainting, and injuries caused by a fall. Tell your provider if you feel dizzy, or have vision changes or ringing in the ears.
- Some people get shoulder pain that can be more severe and longer lasting than the more routine soreness that can follow injections. This happens very rarely.
- Any medication can cause a severe allergic reaction. Such reactions from a vaccine are very rare, estimated at about 1 in a million doses, and would happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a serious injury or death.

The safety of vaccines is always being monitored. For more information, visit: www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/

5 What if there is a serious problem?

What should I look for?

- Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or unusual behavior.

Signs of a **severe allergic reaction** can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These would start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

What should I do?

- If you think it is a **severe allergic reaction** or other emergency that can't wait, call 9-1-1 or get to the nearest hospital. Otherwise, call your clinic.

Afterward, the reaction should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Your doctor should file this report, or you can do it yourself through the VAERS web site at www.vaers.hhs.gov, or by calling **1-800-822-7967**.

VAERS does not give medical advice.

6 The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program

The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP) is a federal program that was created to compensate people who may have been injured by certain vaccines.

Persons who believe they may have been injured by a vaccine can learn about the program and about filing a claim by calling **1-800-338-2382** or visiting the VICP website at www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation. There is a time limit to file a claim for compensation.

7 How can I learn more?

- Ask your healthcare provider. He or she can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)** or
 - Visit CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines

Vaccine Information Statement
Hepatitis A Vaccine

7/20/2016

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Office Use
Only



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1 Why get vaccinated?

Hepatitis B vaccine can prevent **hepatitis B**.

Hepatitis B is a liver disease that can cause mild illness lasting a few weeks, or it can lead to a serious, lifelong illness.

- **Acute hepatitis B infection** is a short-term illness that can lead to fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, jaundice (yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements), and pain in the muscles, joints, and stomach.
- **Chronic hepatitis B infection** is a long-term illness that occurs when the hepatitis B virus remains in a person's body. Most people who go on to develop chronic hepatitis B do not have symptoms, but it is still very serious and can lead to liver damage (cirrhosis), liver cancer, and death. Chronically-infected people can spread hepatitis B virus to others, even if they do not feel or look sick themselves.

Hepatitis B is spread when blood, semen, or other body fluid infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of a person who is not infected. People can become infected through:

- Birth (if a mother has hepatitis B, her baby can become infected)
- Sharing items such as razors or toothbrushes with an infected person
- Contact with the blood or open sores of an infected person
- Sex with an infected partner
- Sharing needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment
- Exposure to blood from needlesticks or other sharp instruments

Most people who are vaccinated with hepatitis B vaccine are immune for life.

2 Hepatitis B vaccine

Hepatitis B vaccine is usually given as 2, 3, or 4 shots.

Infants should get their first dose of hepatitis B vaccine at birth and will usually complete the series at 6 months of age (sometimes it will take longer than 6 months to complete the series).

Children and adolescents younger than 19 years of age who have not yet gotten the vaccine should also be vaccinated.

Hepatitis B vaccine is also recommended for certain **unvaccinated adults**:

- People whose sex partners have hepatitis B
- Sexually active persons who are not in a long-term monogamous relationship
- Persons seeking evaluation or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease
- Men who have sexual contact with other men
- People who share needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment
- People who have household contact with someone infected with the hepatitis B virus
- Health care and public safety workers at risk for exposure to blood or body fluids
- Residents and staff of facilities for developmentally disabled persons
- Persons in correctional facilities
- Victims of sexual assault or abuse
- Travelers to regions with increased rates of hepatitis B
- People with chronic liver disease, kidney disease, HIV infection, infection with hepatitis C, or diabetes
- Anyone who wants to be protected from hepatitis B

Hepatitis B vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.



3

Talk with your health care provider

Tell your vaccine provider if the person getting the vaccine:

- Has had an **allergic reaction after a previous dose of hepatitis B vaccine**, or has any **severe, life-threatening allergies**.

In some cases, your health care provider may decide to postpone hepatitis B vaccination to a future visit.

People with minor illnesses, such as a cold, may be vaccinated. People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting hepatitis B vaccine.

Your health care provider can give you more information.

4

Risks of a vaccine reaction

- Soreness where the shot is given or fever can happen after hepatitis B vaccine.

People sometimes faint after medical procedures, including vaccination. Tell your provider if you feel dizzy or have vision changes or ringing in the ears.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a severe allergic reaction, other serious injury, or death.

5

What if there is a serious problem?

An allergic reaction could occur after the vaccinated person leaves the clinic. If you see signs of a severe allergic reaction (hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, or weakness), call **9-1-1** and get the person to the nearest hospital.

For other signs that concern you, call your health care provider.

Adverse reactions should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Your health care provider will usually file this report, or you can do it yourself. Visit the VAERS website at www.vaers.hhs.gov or call **1-800-822-7967**. *VAERS is only for reporting reactions, and VAERS staff do not give medical advice.*

6

The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program

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How can I learn more?

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- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)** or
 - Visit CDC's www.cdc.gov/vaccines

Vaccine Information Statement (Interim)
Hepatitis B Vaccine



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