



Important Facts for Parents to Know about

The Hepatitis A Vaccine

The hepatitis A vaccine protects against hepatitis A virus, which can cause serious liver disease, jaundice, severe abdominal pains and diarrhea. In rare cases, hepatitis A infection can cause death.

- Hepatitis A virus exists in the stool of infected people. Therefore, it can be transmitted through normal household contact with an infected person, by eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water, or in daycare settings. Each year, approximately 125,000 to 200,000 people are infected with hepatitis A virus.
- Most infected people suffer only short-term illness or have symptoms that last for less than two months. However, about 100 people die from the disease each year.
- Approximately one-third of the cases of hepatitis A occur among children 5 to 14 years of age. Hepatitis A virus is more common in the areas with higher populations of Native Americans and Alaskan Natives than in other places in the United States.

The vaccine effectively protects 97-99% of children and adults who receive the full series of shots.

About half of the children and adults who receive the vaccine will have *no side effects at all* and most others will have only a mild reaction.

- Mild reactions include soreness or swelling where the shot was given (occurs in 20% to 50% of cases). Other mild reactions are temporary fatigue, or low-grade fever (occurs in less than 10% of cases).
- Aspirin-free pain reliever can be used to reduce fever and soreness.

No serious side effects have been attributed to the hepatitis A vaccine. In very rare cases, a person may be allergic to some components of the vaccine (such as a preservative).

- Signs of an allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heartbeat, or dizziness.
- If you do notice any serious reactions, you should call your doctor immediately.

Immunizations are one of the most important ways parents can protect their children against serious infectious diseases.

parents:

Please also read the Vaccine Information Statement on the hepatitis A vaccine from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for other important information, including who should and should not get the vaccine.