

What should I do if I think I've been exposed to HAV?

If you think you have been exposed to HAV, consult your health professional or health department. You might need immune globulin, which if given in time, can immediately protect you after being exposed to HAV. You might also want to receive the hepatitis A vaccine at this time, for future protection.

If you do become ill with hepatitis A, you will need to get information from your health professional on how to take care of yourself. Your household and sexual contacts might need immune globulin so they do not get hepatitis A.

If I've been vaccinated against hepatitis B, will this protect me from HAV?

No. Hepatitis B vaccine will not protect you from HAV infection. However, there is a vaccine that is available to protect adults against both hepatitis A and hepatitis B.

Will hepatitis A vaccine protect me against hepatitis B or hepatitis C?

No. Hepatitis A, B, and C are different viruses. Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and HAV infections can be prevented by vaccination; unfortunately, there is no vaccine to prevent infection with hepatitis C virus at this time.

Everyone needs vaccinations!

If you can't afford shots or don't know where to get them, call (800) 232-2522, or call your local or state health department.



Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease



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The Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) encourages you to make and distribute copies of this brochure. If you alter it, please acknowledge that it was adapted from IAC. The technical content was reviewed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Vaccination can protect you

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by infection with the hepatitis A virus (HAV).

How is HAV spread?

HAV is usually spread from getting particles of fecal material into your mouth that might be too small to be seen. This happens through household or sexual contact with an infected person or by eating HAV-contaminated food or drinking HAV-contaminated

water. Casual contact, such as in a school or work setting, does not spread HAV.



What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Infected persons can have no symptoms at all or be extremely ill. Only 30% of children less than six years of age develop symptoms, while 70% of older children and adults develop symptoms.

If a person does develop symptoms, they might include fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, dark urine, and/or jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin). These symptoms can last up to six months. With or without symptoms, people with HAV infection can spread the infection to others.

How serious is hepatitis A?

About 15% of people with hepatitis A require hospitalization. Adults who become ill often miss several weeks of work. There are approximately 100 deaths each year in the U.S. from hepatitis A.

How can HAV infection be prevented?

A safe and effective vaccine to prevent HAV infection has been available in the U.S. since 1995. Good hand washing might also help stop

the spread of HAV. Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet, changing a diaper, and before preparing or eating food.

Who should get hepatitis A vaccine?

If you fall into any of the following groups, you should consult with your health professional about getting vaccinated against HAV:

- men who have sex with men
- users of street drugs (injecting and non-injecting)
- children, two years of age and older, who live in areas with historically increased rates of hepatitis A (for information about these areas, contact your local health department)
- people who travel or work in any area of the world except the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia
- people with chronic liver disease, including hepatitis C
- people working with live hepatitis A virus
- people with clotting factor disorders, such as hemophilia

What if I don't fit into any of these groups, but still want to be protected against HAV infection?

If you want to receive hepatitis A vaccine, there is no medical reason it cannot be given (a child must be two years of age or older). The cost of the vaccine might not be covered by your health insurance, so you might have to pay for it yourself.

How can I protect myself against HAV when traveling?

Get vaccinated against HAV before traveling to any area of the world except the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Japan, New Zealand, and

Australia. Discuss this with your health professional in advance of your departure, as it takes about four weeks for immunity to begin after the first dose of hepatitis A vaccine. If you don't have at least four weeks advance notice when traveling, check with your health professional about receiving a shot called immune globulin. This preparation provides short-term protection against HAV infection.

How long does hepatitis A vaccine protect you?

Research suggests that protection will last for at least 20 years.

How safe is hepatitis A vaccine? Does it have any side effects?

Many studies have shown that hepatitis A vaccine is very safe. Since 1995, more than seven million doses of hepatitis A vaccine have been given in the U.S. with no reports of serious health problems linked to the vaccine. Side effects might include soreness at the injection site, headache, and tiredness. These symptoms, if they occur, last for only a short time.

How effective is hepatitis A vaccine?

Almost 100% of people are protected from HAV infection after getting two doses of vaccine.

How many shots are needed?

Children and adults need two doses of hepatitis A vaccine, spaced at least six months apart. At least 94% of people will be protected after the first dose, but a second dose is necessary to assure long-term protection.

