

HEPATITIS A is one of several types of hepatitis viruses that cause inflammation affecting your liver's ability to function. It's usually spread through ingesting contaminated food or water or close contact (including sexual relations) with someone who is already infected. Symptoms of hepatitis A include flu-like illness, jaundice, stomach cramping and diarrhea. Frequent hand-washing with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, or before preparing food can help prevent the spread of hepatitis A.

The Hepatitis A vaccine is the best way to prevent infection and is safe and effective. The vaccine, given in two doses six months apart, is injected into the arm or thigh muscle. Both shots are needed for long-term protection.

WHO SHOULD GET THE HEPATITIS A VACCINE?

1. All children at age 1 year.
2. Unvaccinated children or adolescents in communities with hepatitis A outbreaks.
3. Travelers to countries that have high rates of hepatitis A.
4. Families planning to adopt a child or care for an adopted child from a country with high rates of hepatitis A.
5. Men who have sexual contact with other men.
6. Users of illegal injection and non-injection drugs.
7. People with chronic liver diseases such as hepatitis B or hepatitis C.
8. People who are treated with clotting-factor concentrates for hemophilia or another medical condition.
9. People who work with hepatitis A infected animals or in a hepatitis A research laboratory.
10. Any person who has been exposed to the hepatitis A virus.

WHO SHOULD NOT GET THE HEPATITIS A VACCINE?

- Anyone with a life-threatening allergy to any vaccine component (all hepatitis A vaccines contain aluminum and some hepatitis A vaccines contain 2-phenoxyethanol).
- Anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of hepatitis A vaccine.
- Anyone who is moderately ill.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE HEPATITIS A VACCINE?

Mild-to-moderate problems: soreness, redness or swelling where the shot was given, headache, tiredness and loss of appetite.

Severe problems (rare): difficulty breathing, wheezing, hives, pale skin, fast heartbeat, and dizziness.

REFERENCES

Hamborsky J, Kroger A, Wolfe S, eds. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases*. 13th ed. Washington, DC: Public Health Foundation, 2015.

Vaccine Information Statement: *Hepatitis A Vaccine (What You Need to Know)* October 25, 2011.
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/hep-a.html>. Accessed April 2016.