VACCINE INFORMATION STATEMENT

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 http://www.immunize.org/vis

1 What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). HAV is found in the stool of people with hepatitis A.

It is usually spread by close personal contact and sometimes by eating food or drinking water containing HAV. A person who has hepatitis A can easily pass the disease to others within the same household.

Hepatitis A can cause:
- "flu-like" illness
- jaundice (yellow skin or eyes, dark urine)
- severe stomach pains and diarrhea (children)

People with hepatitis A often have to be hospitalized (up to about 1 person in 5).

Adults with hepatitis A are often too ill to work for up to a month.

Sometimes, people die as a result of hepatitis A (about 3-6 deaths per 1,000 cases).

Hepatitis A vaccine can prevent hepatitis A.

2 Who should get hepatitis A vaccine and when?

WHO?

Some people should be routinely vaccinated with hepatitis A vaccine:

- All children between their first and second birthdays (12 through 23 months of age).
- Anyone 1 year of age and older traveling to or working in countries with high or intermediate prevalence of hepatitis A, such as those located in Central or South America, Mexico, Asia (except Japan), Africa, and eastern Europe. For more information see www.cdc.gov/travel.
- Children and adolescents 2 through 18 years of age who live in states or communities where routine vaccination has been implemented because of high disease incidence.
- Men who have sex with men.
- People who use street drugs.
- People with chronic liver disease.
- People who are treated with clotting factor concentrates.
- People who work with HAV-infected primates or who work with HAV in research laboratories.
- Members of households planning to adopt a child, or care for a newly arriving adopted child, from a country where hepatitis A is common.

Other people might get hepatitis A vaccine in certain situations (ask your doctor for more details):

- Unvaccinated children or adolescents in communities where outbreaks of hepatitis A are occurring.
- Unvaccinated people who have been exposed to hepatitis A virus.
- Anyone 1 year of age or older who wants protection from hepatitis A.

Hepatitis A vaccine is not licensed for children younger than 1 year of age.

WHEN?

For children, the first dose should be given at 12 through 23 months of age. Children who are not vaccinated by 2 years of age can be vaccinated at later visits.

For others at risk, the hepatitis A vaccine series may be started whenever a person wishes to be protected or is at risk of infection.

For travelers, it is best to start the vaccine series at least one month before traveling. (Some protection may still result if the vaccine is given on or closer to the travel date.)

Some people who cannot get the vaccine before traveling, or for whom the vaccine might not be effective, can get a shot called immune globulin (IG). IG gives immediate, temporary protection.

Two doses of the vaccine are needed for lasting protection. These doses should be given at least 6 months apart.

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

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

3 Some people should not get hepatitis A vaccine or should wait.

- Anyone who has ever had a severe (life threatening) allergic reaction to a previous dose of hepatitis A vaccine should not get another dose.
- Anyone who has a severe (life threatening) allergy to any vaccine component should not get the vaccine. **Tell your doctor if you have any severe allergies,** including a severe allergy to latex. All hepatitis A vaccines contain alum, and some hepatitis A vaccines contain 2-phenoxyethanol.
- Anyone who is moderately or severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled should probably wait until they recover. Ask your doctor. People with a mild illness can usually get the vaccine.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant. Because hepatitis A vaccine is inactivated (killed), the risk to a pregnant woman or her unborn baby is believed to be very low. But your doctor can weigh any theoretical risk from the vaccine against the need for protection.

4 What are the risks from hepatitis A vaccine?

A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of hepatitis A vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

Getting hepatitis A vaccine is much safer than getting the disease.

Mild problems

- soreness where the shot was given *(about 1 out of 2 adults, and up to 1 out of 6 children)*
- headache *(about 1 out of 6 adults and 1 out of 25 children)*
- loss of appetite *(about 1 out of 12 children)*
- tiredness *(about 1 out of 14 adults)*

If these problems occur, they usually last 1 or 2 days.

Severe problems

- serious allergic reaction, within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot *(very rare)*.

5 What if there is a moderate or severe reaction?

What should I look for?

- Any unusual condition, such as a high fever or unusual behavior. Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heart beat or dizziness.

What should I do?

- **Call** a doctor, or get the person to a doctor right away.
- **Tell** your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- **Ask** your doctor, nurse, or health department to report the reaction by filing a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form. Or you can file this report through the VAERS web site at **www.vaers.hhs.gov**, or by calling **1-800-822-7967**.

VAERS does not provide medical advice.

6 The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program

The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP) was created in 1986.

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**.

7 How can I learn more?

- Ask your doctor They 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 (Interim)

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