

Important Information about **Hepatitis A Disease** and Hepatitis A Vaccine

PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY

What is HEPATITIS A?

- It is an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus.
- It is spread by the fecal-oral route through direct contact with infected persons or indirectly through ingestion of contaminated food or water.
- It can cause fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and yellow skin and eyes (jaundice).
- Infection without symptoms is quite common in infants and young children.
- The illness may last several weeks. Most people recover completely.

What is HEPATITIS A Vaccine?

- The schedule consists of two doses of vaccine. The second dose is given six to twelve months after the first dose.
- Protection from the vaccine lasts at least 20 years. At the present time, booster doses are not necessary.
- Hepatitis A vaccine is very safe. There is no risk of getting hepatitis A or any other virus from the vaccine.

CAUTION

SOME PEOPLE SHOULD CHECK WITH A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER BEFORE THEY RECEIVE THIS VACCINE.

- Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of hepatitis A vaccine.
- People taking high doses of oral steroids or undergoing treatment for cancer.

What to Expect Following Hepatitis A Vaccine

People should stay in the clinic for at least 15 minutes after receiving any type of immunization to monitor possible reaction. As with any vaccine there is a slight possibility that a more serious reaction could occur.

Side effects from the vaccine are rare.

- Some people may have mild pain and redness at the site where the vaccine was given.
- Other side effects—like a slight fever, headache, malaise or gastrointestinal symptoms—are uncommon.

As fever may occur, make sure you have acetaminophen or ibuprofen at home. Follow the instructions that come with the product. These medications should not be taken if you have certain medical conditions. Talk to your health care provider about your medical history before using either of these medications.

Questions:

If you have any questions regarding hepatitis A or the hepatitis A vaccine, please contact your local Public Health Services office or your health care provider.

For more information on immunization, please visit the websites of

- the Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness at www.immunize.cpha.ca
- the Public Health Agency of Canada at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca