

Hepatitis A Vaccine

Vaccines have saved more lives than any other medical intervention. They help the immune system recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause serious diseases.

Hepatitis A is a vaccine preventable disease.

- Hepatitis A is a virus that infects the liver. For every 1,000 people infected, 1 to 3 could die. In adults 50 years and older, 1 in 4 adults with HA are hospitalized and 18 out of 1,000 cases can die.
- There is no cure or specific treatment for Hepatitis A. The illness usually goes away on its own, which is why prevention is so important.

How does Hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A spreads when the virus enters the mouth. This can happen:

- By eating or drinking food or water that has been contaminated.
- Through close personal contact with someone who is infected
- By touching surfaces or objects (such as countertops or dishes) that have the virus on them.
- By sharing bathrooms, food, or drinks with someone who is infectious.
- Through sexual contact.
- By sharing drug-use equipment such as straws or pipes.

What are symptoms of Hepatitis A?

- Symptoms usually appear **15 to 50 days** after infection. Some people may not feel sick at all but can still spread the virus.
- Symptoms usually last from 1-2 weeks but can last longer. Common symptoms include:
 - Feeling very tired, fever, loss of appetite or nausea.
 - Yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice).
 - Dark urine and pale-coloured stools.
- A person can spread hepatitis A up to 2 weeks before symptoms start and for 1 week after jaundice appears.

How to prevent Hepatitis A

- **Get immunized.** Vaccination protects you and helps to protect others.
- **Wash your hands often**, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing or eating food.

Who can get Hepatitis A vaccine for free?

- People 6 months and older who have been in close contact with someone who has Hepatitis A (within 14 days of exposure).
- People born since January 1, 1982, who: live in any SK First Nations community; live in the Athabasca Health Authority; or live in a non-First Nations community in Northern SK (former Mamawetan Churchill River and Keewatin Yatthé health regions **excluding** Creighton, Air Ronge and La Ronge).
- Liver transplant candidates or recipients.
- Haematopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT) recipients.
- Non-immune individuals with bleeding disorders and others who receive frequent blood products or plasma-derived replacement clotting factors.
- People with chronic liver disease (including alcoholism, Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B, cirrhosis) and are non-immune to hepatitis A.
- Men who have sex with men.
- People who use or share drug use equipment.
- Sexual partners and household contacts of individuals who use illicit drugs.

Who should not get Hepatitis A vaccine?

- People who are very sick should wait until they are feeling better.
- Anyone who had a serious or life-threatening reaction to a previous Hepatitis A vaccine or its ingredients.

What are common reactions to Hepatitis A vaccine?

- **The Hepatitis A vaccine is very safe. Getting the vaccine is much safer than getting Hepatitis A.**
- Temporary soreness, redness and swelling where the needle was given.
- Headache, tiredness, fever, or stomach upset.
- These reactions are usually mild and last 1 to 2 days.
- Treat a fever (at least 6 to 8 hours after immunization) if you or your child is uncomfortable, not drinking fluids or having trouble sleeping.

After getting a vaccine, it's important to stay in the clinic for **15 minutes**. In very rare cases, a serious life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis can happen. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. This reaction is extremely rare, happening in fewer than 1 in 1 million people, and it can be treated if it occurs. **If you notice these symptoms after you leave the clinic, get medical help right away or call 911.**

Use **Acetaminophen** (all ages; Tylenol®, Tempra®) or **Ibuprofen** (6 months and older; Advil®, Motrin®) to treat fevers and pain. **Never give ASA** (Asprin®) to anyone younger than 18 years of age because of the serious risk of Reye's syndrome.

Who should you report reactions to?

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, doctor, nurse practitioner or HealthLine 811 as soon as possible.

Talk to a public health nurse:

- If you have questions or concerns about you or your child's reaction to an immunization.
- If you or your child had to go to a doctor, a hospital or to a health centre with a symptom that might be related to immunization.

For more information, contact your local public health office, physician, nurse practitioner, or HealthLine 811.

Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents/guardians discuss consent for immunization with their children. Efforts are first made to get parental/guardian consent for immunizations. However, children at least 13 years of age up to and including 17 years of age, who can understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risks of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations in Saskatchewan by providing mature minor informed consent to a healthcare provider.

What does Hepatitis A vaccine contain?

AVAXIM® contains inactivated hepatitis A virus (GBM strain), 2- phenoxyethanol, ethanol anhydrous, formaldehyde, aluminum hydroxide (expressed as aluminum), Medium 199 Hanks in water for injection, neomycin is present in trace amounts. Thimerosal-free. Latex-free.

HAVRIX® 1440 and HAVRIX® 720 contain formaldehyde-inactivated hepatitis A virus, aluminum hydroxide, amino acids for injection, disodium phosphate, monopotassium phosphate, polysorbate 20, potassium chloride, sodium chloride and water for injection. Residue from manufacturing process: neomycin sulfate. Thimerosal-free. Latex-free.

VAQTA® contains inactivated hepatitis A virus protein, amorphous aluminum hydroxyphosphate sulfate, sodium borate, sodium chloride, water for injection, trace amounts of neomycin, bovine albumin, and formaldehyde. Thimerosal-free. Latex is present in the vial stopper.

Resources:

- Provincial immunization fact sheets are available at www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize.
- [Canadian Immunization Guide](#). Product monographs (AVAXIM®; HAVRIX®; VAQTA®).