

Hepatitis A Immunization

The **hepatitis A immunization** is provided for free to people at high risk of hepatitis A infection. This immunization is the best way to protect against hepatitis A and its complications. Two doses administered 6-12 months apart are required for full protection.

Hepatitis A (HA) is a liver infection caused by a virus. The hepatitis A virus is found in the stool of infected persons. People with hepatitis A infection who use the bathroom without proper handwashing can pass the virus through food preparation or other hand-to-mouth contact. The disease can be spread by sexual contact, sharing of equipment used in illegal drug use, such as needles, or drinking contaminated water. Some people, especially young children, may not have any symptoms but can still spread the disease.

Hepatitis A can cause:

- Fever
- Abdominal pain
- Jaundice (yellow skin/eyes)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Dark urine
- Pale stools

Complications of Hepatitis A may lead to:

- Acute liver failure
- Death (more common in older people and those with chronic liver disease)

Why is the Hepatitis A vaccine recommended?

This vaccine is very effective and is provided free to clients who are high risk. Hepatitis A is a very contagious virus. Those over age 50 that get infected are at increased risk of more severe symptoms, including death. Getting vaccinated against hepatitis A helps protect others as well as yourself.

Possible side effects of the immunization:

Common reactions to the immunization may include redness, tenderness, and swelling at the injection site. Some may develop a fever, headache, fatigue, or digestive problems. These are generally mild and last 1-2 days. Side effects of the immunization are easily relieved by: Applying a cold/damp compress to the site, administering acetaminophen or ibuprofen for temperatures 38.5°C or higher. See your health care provider if your symptoms are severe or last longer than 48 hours.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any immunization because there is a rare possibility of developing a severe allergic reaction which is treatable at the clinic. This happens to fewer than 1 in 1 million people. If it happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.

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