

# Hepatitis A Vaccine

## Addressing Common Questions about Hepatitis A Vaccination for Adults

### What disease does this vaccine protect against?

Hepatitis A vaccine protects against a serious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus.

### How common is this disease?

In 2011, there were an estimated 2,800 new hepatitis A infections in the U.S.

### How is this disease spread?

Hepatitis A is spread person-to-person through ingestion of something that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person. This disease is usually spread by close personal contact with an infected person or by eating food or drinking water containing the hepatitis A virus. A person who has hepatitis A can easily pass the disease to others within the same household.

### Who is at risk for this disease?

Although anyone can get hepatitis A, some people are at greater risk, such as those who:

- Travel to or live in countries where hepatitis A is common
- Have sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis A
- Are men who have sexual encounters with other men
- Use recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- Have clotting-factor disorders, such as hemophilia
- Are household members or caregivers of a person infected with hepatitis A

### What could happen if I get this disease?

Many people with hepatitis A do not have symptoms. If symptoms do occur, the infection can cause “flu-like” illness, jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), and severe stomach pains.

- About 20% of people with hepatitis A have to be hospitalized.
- Adults with hepatitis A are often too ill to work for a month or more.
- Sometimes, people die as a result of hepatitis A (about 3-6 deaths per 1,000 cases).
- In 2010, there were 95 deaths in the U.S. reported as being caused by hepatitis A.

For more information on this and other vaccines for adults, visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults).

**DON'T WAIT.  
VACCINATE!**



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

# Addressing Common Questions about Hepatitis A Vaccination for Adults

## Who should get this vaccine? When and how often is this vaccine needed?

The following adults should be vaccinated with hepatitis A vaccine:

- Anyone traveling to or working in countries where hepatitis A is common, such as countries in Central or South America, Mexico, Asia (except Japan), Africa, and Eastern Europe
- Men who have sex with men
- People who use recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- People with chronic liver disease
- People who are treated with clotting factor concentrates
- People who work with hepatitis A-infected primates or who work with hepatitis A virus 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

For travelers, visit [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) for more information.

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

## Who should not get this vaccine?

People who have had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of hepatitis A vaccine OR those with severe allergy to any part of this vaccine (including latex) should not get this vaccine. All hepatitis A vaccines contain alum, and some hepatitis A vaccines contain 2-phenoxyethanol.

## How well does the vaccine work?

Hepatitis A rates in the United States have declined by 95% since hepatitis A vaccine first became available in 1995. Most adults are expected to be protected from hepatitis A for at least 25 years after getting two vaccinations, although this can vary depending upon a person's age and health condition. Getting vaccinated gives you the best protection possible against this disease.

## How safe is this vaccine?

Hepatitis A vaccine is very safe. It went through years of testing before being licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1995 and continues to be monitored for safety by the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### Is it safe to get if I have certain health conditions or am taking prescription meds?

Unless you have had an allergic reaction in the past to this vaccine or have allergies to certain components of the vaccine, it is safe to get. It is safe for people taking prescription medications to get vaccines.

## What are the potential side effects of this vaccine?

In some cases, the vaccine may cause mild and temporary (1 – 2 days) soreness where the shot was given, headache, and tiredness. The risk of hepatitis A vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

## Where can I get the vaccine?

Hepatitis A vaccine may be available at private doctor offices, public or travel health clinics, pharmacies, or other community locations (such as schools/universities). Check with your doctor or pharmacist or use the [Adult Vaccine Finder \(vaccine.healthmap.org\)](http://vaccine.healthmap.org) to help find places that provide hepatitis A vaccine near you.

## How much do the vaccine cost?

Most private health insurance covers recommended adult vaccines, including hepatitis A vaccine. Check with your insurance provider for details on whether there is any cost to you and for a list of in-network vaccine providers.