

CARING FOR THE LIVER



HEPATITIS A VACCINATION

Hepatitis A occurs in epidemics both nationwide and in communities. During epidemic years (i.e., 1987-1997), the number of reported cases in the U.S. reached 35,000. Historically, the highest rates were reported among children and young adults. Approximately one third of reported cases involved children less than 15 years of age. In the late 1990s, however, vaccine against hepatitis A virus (HAV) infection became more widely used, and since 1998, hepatitis A rates have declined in all age groups. The number of cases has now reached historic lows.

Who Should Be Vaccinated?

Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for the following persons 2 years of age and older:

- Travelers to areas with increased rates of hepatitis A
- Men who have sex with men
- Injecting and non-injecting drug users
- Persons with clotting-factor disorders (e.g., hemophilia)
- Persons with chronic liver disease
- Children living in areas with increased rates of hepatitis A

About the Vaccines

Hepatitis A vaccines are made from inactivated hepatitis A virus and are given in a 2-dose series. These vaccines have proven safe and highly effective when given before exposure to HAV. A combined hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine is also available for persons 18 years of age and older. Check with your doctor or nurse to determine your vaccination schedule.

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HEPATITIS B VACCINATION

Hepatitis B, a sexually transmitted disease is 100 times more infectious than human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. It occurs most often among persons 25 to 39 years of age.

Who Should Be Vaccinated?

The CDC, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that all newborns, infants, and children 0 to 18 years of age, including children adopted from high-risk regions, be vaccinated against HBV infection. The Vaccines for Children Program provides free hepatitis B vaccination to the following young people under the age of 19 years:

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