



## Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



# Hepatitis A Vaccine

## What is it?

Hepatitis A vaccine protects against the hepatitis A virus which can cause damage to your liver. There are two vaccines that protect against hepatitis A; the hepatitis A vaccine and a combined hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine.

## Who should receive the vaccine?

Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for anyone who is at risk for hepatitis A infection. The following people can get publicly funded (free) hepatitis A vaccine:

- persons with chronic liver disease (including hepatitis B and hepatitis C)
- persons who are intravenous or injection drug users
- men who have sex with men (MSM)

## How effective is the vaccine?

Hepatitis A vaccine can provide at least 90-97% protection against the hepatitis A virus in most healthy adults and children who receive a complete series.

Hepatitis A vaccine provides about 80% protection against the hepatitis A virus if given within one week of being exposed.

## What is the schedule for the vaccine?

Two doses of the vaccine are needed for lasting protection. These doses should be given 6-36 months apart depending on the product. Hepatitis A vaccine may be given at the same time as other routine vaccine(s), but at a different site using a different needle.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | [durham.ca/health](https://durham.ca/health)

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



# Are there side effects with the vaccine?

The most common side effects are:

- soreness and redness where the vaccine was given
- headache
- irritability
- malaise
- fever
- fatigue
- gastrointestinal symptoms

Side effects are usually mild and only last a short time. A cold, wet compress applied to the injection site and/or acetaminophen can be used to help relieve pain, swelling and/or mild fever after vaccination.

Severe allergic reactions after vaccination are very rare and may not be related to the vaccine. However, if you think a serious reaction is developing, seek medical attention right away. Any unusual or significant changes in your health or your child's health after the immunization should be reported to a health care provider and the Health Department.

## Who should not get the vaccine?

- Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction (called anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of hepatitis A vaccine.
- People who are sick with a high fever, moderate or severe acute illness worse than a cold should wait until they feel better before getting the vaccine.
- If you have any medical conditions, discuss the vaccine with a healthcare provider to determine if you should receive it.
- Any component in a vaccine may be a potential allergen. The most common for hepatitis A are:
  - Neomycin
  - Latex (Vaqta® only)
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women should discuss the need for hepatitis A vaccine with their health care provider before vaccination.

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