

# Hepatitis A

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## *Can Hepatitis A Be Prevented By a Vaccination?*

Yes, it is called Havrix.

## *What Is Hepatitis A?*

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious virus transmitted most commonly person-to-person via the oral-fecal route.

## *How Can Hepatitis A Virus Be Spread?*

### **Infection may be spread by:**

- Contaminated water
- Infected food handlers
- Poor sanitary conditions during floods and natural disasters
- Ingestion of raw or undercooked shellfish
- Traveling to areas with poor hygienic conditions
- Institutionalized children and adults
- Day care centers
- Care takers
- Engaging in high-risk sexual activity such as homosexuality
- Users of IV drugs

The incubation period (i.e., from the time of exposure to the start of symptoms) averages 28 days.

## *What Are The Symptoms of Hepatitis A Virus?*

The major symptoms are fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and jaundice.

Hepatitis A is often asymptomatic in children less than two years of age, but they may carry the virus in their stools.

## *When Is The Hepatitis A (Havrix) Vaccination Given?*

In adults, a primary dose is given initially then a booster 6 to 12 months later.

In those 2-18 years of age one dose initially followed by a dose in one month and then a booster at 6 to 12 months.

## *Who Should Receive This Hepatitis A Vaccination?*

This vaccination is indicated for those persons who are exposed to the hepatitis A virus and to those that desire protection against the virus such as travelers. It is also recommended that this vaccination be given to persons with chronic liver disease.

**TRAVELERS:** These areas include, but are not limited to the following; Africa, Asia, (except Japan), the Mediterranean Basin, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central

and South America, Mexico, and parts of the Caribbean.

## **Immunization should be given at least two weeks before travel.**

People exposed to Hepatitis A virus may be given both the hepatitis A vaccination (Havrix) and also immunoglobulin for both immediate and long-term protection.

It is not recommended that Havrix be given to pregnant women or nursing mothers.

**If you have any questions, please consult your physician.**