HEPATITIS A AND THE VACCINE TO PREVENT IT

The best way to protect against hepatitis A is by getting the hepatitis A vaccine. Doctors recommend that all children get the vaccine.

Why should my child get the hepatitis A shot?

The hepatitis A vaccine:

- Protects your child against hepatitis A, a potentially serious disease.
- Protects other people from the disease because children under 6 years old with hepatitis A usually don't have symptoms, but they often pass the disease to others without anyone knowing they were infected.
- Keeps your child from missing school or child care (and keeps you from missing work to care for your sick child).

Is the hepatitis A shot safe?

The hepatitis A vaccine is very safe, and it is effective at preventing the hepatitis A disease. Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects.

What are the side effects?

The most common side effects are usually mild and last 1 or 2 days. They include the following:

- Sore arm from the shot
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Fever
- Loss of appetite (not wanting to eat)

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. Children with the virus often don't have symptoms, but they often pass the disease to others, including their unvaccinated parents or caregivers. These individuals can get very sick.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Children under 6 years old often have no symptoms. Older children and adults feel very sick and weak. Symptoms usually appear 2 to 6 weeks after a person gets the virus. The symptoms may include the following:

- Fever
- Loss of appetite (not wanting to eat)
- Tiredness
- Stomach pain
- Vomiting
- Dark urine
- Yellow skin and eyes

Is it serious?

Older children, adolescents and adults often feel sick and symptoms can last for up to 6 months. There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A. Some people with hepatitis A get so sick that they need care in the hospital.

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Ask your provider or visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents for more information.

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How does hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A virus is found in the stool (poop) of a person who has the virus. It spreads when a person puts something in his or her mouth that has the hepatitis A virus on it. Even if the item looks clean, it can still have virus on it that can spread to others. The amount of stool can be so tiny that it cannot be seen with the naked eye. You can get it by touching objects such as doorknobs or diapers or eating food that has the virus on it.

Recommendations

Doctors recommend that your child get two doses of the hepatitis A shot for best protection. He or she should get the first dose at 12 through 23 months. He or she will need the second dose 6 months after the last dose.

Where can I learn more about the hepatitis A vaccine and my child?

To learn more about the pneumococcal vaccine, talk to your child's healthcare provider or visit: **www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents**

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