

Hepatitis A vaccine

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). HAV is found in the stool of persons with hepatitis A. It is usually spread by close personal contact and sometimes by eating food or drinking water containing HAV. Hepatitis A can cause:

- mild “flu-like” illness
- jaundice (yellow skin or eyes)
- severe stomach pains and diarrhea

These symptoms can persist for 2-3 months. The disease is more severe for someone who already has liver disease.

People with hepatitis A sometimes have to be hospitalized (up to about 1 person in 5). Sometimes, people die as a result of hepatitis A (about 3-5 deaths per 1,000 cases).

A person who has hepatitis A can easily pass the disease to others within the same household.

Hepatitis A vaccine is given as a two dose series, with at least 6 months between the first and second dose. (The ideal interval is 6 to 18 months between doses.) The vaccine provides 18 months of full protection after the first dose and over twenty years of protection after the second dose.