

# Hepatitis A Vaccine

## Fact Sheet



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
EMERGENCY SERVICES

### What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a potentially serious viral infection of the liver. It is one of the most common vaccine preventable infections acquired during travel. The virus that causes this infection is passed through contaminated food and water. It may also be passed directly from infected persons through contact with unwashed hands, or through sexual behaviors involving anal contact. Symptoms usually appear 1–2 months after exposure. Most people with Hepatitis A feel generally unwell and experience fever, vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhea, and yellowing of the skin (jaundice). Recovery may take several months. Children may have very mild or no symptoms; however, they may still pass on Hepatitis A to others.

### Who should get this vaccine?

This vaccine should be given to travelers who may be exposed to unsafe food and water supplies in areas where Hepatitis A is common, or where sanitation or hygiene levels are poor. It should also be given to people with life-style risks for infection including people engaging in injection drug use and men who have sex with men. People who have chronic liver disease, including persons with Hepatitis C, should also have the vaccine because they would be at increased risk of a more serious infection if they do develop Hepatitis A.

### Who should NOT get this vaccine?

1. Children under 1 year of age—the safety of the vaccine is not yet established
2. Persons with known allergy to any component of the vaccine, including aluminum

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.

### Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services

Infectious Disease Program

### Hepatitis A vaccine:

- Evidence suggests protection immediately after first dose
- One dose will give protection for 1 year against Hepatitis A
- A second dose (in 6–12 months or later—still effective if late, no need to restart series)
- International travel experts agree that protection is life long after 2 doses
- The vaccine can be given during pregnancy if there is a risk of infection

### Side effects:

1. Reactions are usually mild and do not last for more than 24 hours
2. Local redness and tenderness at injection site
3. General reactions are uncommon but could include feeling unwell, fatigue, fever, nausea and loss of appetite

### When to seek medical attention:

Severe reactions are rare. If you develop hives, swelling of the face or mouth, trouble breathing, serious drowsiness or other serious problems seek immediate medical attention.

### Your record of protection:

After any immunization, ensure your personal immunization record or Yellow Card is updated.

*Keep it in a safe place!*

### Questions or concerns?

Speak to a Public Health Nurse at 519-575-4400, ext. 5275.