

# Hepatitis A Vaccine



## What is hepatitis A? How common is it?

**H**epatitis A is caused by a virus typically caught by close contact with an infected person or by ingesting contaminated food or water. Over

10,000 cases per year are reported in the United States, especially in those 5 to 14 years old.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can occur 15 to 50 days after someone is exposed to the virus. Younger children frequently have only mild flu-like symptoms, while older children and adults usually become sicker. Common symptoms include nausea, fatigue, stomach pains, diarrhea, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Standard blood tests often reveal liver inflammation and a more specialized blood test can confirm hepatitis A infection.

## What are the complications?

Most people completely recover from hepatitis A within 4 to 6 weeks without any long-term complications. In a minority, however, the infection can be very severe and result in major damage to the liver.

## Hepatitis A vaccination

The vaccine preparations available in the United States consist of inactivated virus and are very effective. A series of 3 injections is necessary to ensure one develops protection against the virus. A booster may be needed to keep adequate protection. Allergic reactions to the vaccine are rare, but, if present, are a reason not to continue receiving the injections. If traveling to an area where hepatitis A is common, protection with immunoglobulin injection is also available.

## Who should get vaccinated?

The vaccine is recommended for anyone at high risk of contracting hepatitis A. This includes:

- Anyone traveling / working in countries with high rates of hepatitis A, such as Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and most parts of Asia,
- Anyone living in communities with high rates or outbreaks of hepatitis A,
- Anyone with a chronic liver disease.

For more information or to locate a pediatric gastroenterologist in your area please visit our website at: [www.naspgghan.org](http://www.naspgghan.org)

**IMPORTANT REMINDER:** This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.

## SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS:



NASPGHAN • PO Box 6 • Flourtown, PA 19031  
215-233-0808 • Fax: 215-233-3939