Hepatitis

Hepatitis A Prevention

The best way to prevent hepatitis A is to be vaccinated. Two HAV vaccines are available: Havrix and Vaqta. Both of these vaccines require two injections, usually administered six months apart. A combination vaccine for HAV and hepatitis B virus (Twinrix) is also available.

Some people should be routinely vaccinated with the hepatitis A vaccine, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- All children between 12 and 23 months old
- People 1 year old and older traveling to or working in countries with high or intermediate prevalence of hepatitis A, such as those in Central or South America, Mexico, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe
- Children and adolescents up to age 18 who live in states or communities where routine vaccination has been implemented because of high disease rates
- Men who have sex with men
- People using street drugs
- People with chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis B or hepatitis C
- People who are treated with clotting factor drugs

The HAV vaccine is very effective. More than 99 percent of people who are vaccinated develop immunity against the virus and will never get HAV even if they are exposed to it.

If side effects from the hepatitis A vaccine occur, they are usually mild and may include soreness at the injection site and mild flu-like symptoms.

Even if you haven’t been vaccinated against hepatitis A, you can take steps to prevent HAV infection:

- Avoid water that could be contaminated with fecal matter.
- Avoid undercooked or raw shellfish.

- Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom or changing a diaper and before preparing and eating food.
- Use a latex barrier—such as a dental dam—for oral-anal sex (“rimming”).

For more information and support for people living with, and at risk for, hepatitis A, please visit our sister site Hep. Click here for an interactive map tracking Hepatitis A in America.

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