

# Important Information about **Hepatitis A Disease** and Hepatitis A Vaccine

## PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY

### What is Hepatitis A?

- Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver caused by the Hepatitis A virus.
- It is spread when germs from the feces (poop) of an infected person get into the mouth of another person. It can also be spread when someone eats or drinks contaminated food or water.
- It can cause fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and yellow skin and eyes (jaundice).
- Infection without symptoms is very common in infants and young children.
- The illness may last several weeks. Most people recover completely.

### What is Hepatitis A vaccine?

- The Hepatitis A vaccine contains whole Hepatitis A virus that has been inactivated. The virus is not active and it can't make you sick. This vaccine will help your immune system fight the Hepatitis A virus if you are exposed to it in the future.
- People need two doses of Hepatitis A vaccine to be fully protected. The second dose is given 6–12 months after the first dose.
- Booster doses are not necessary.

### Who should receive Hepatitis A vaccine?

- The Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended:
  - » for people who have been exposed to Hepatitis A
  - » for controlling the spread of Hepatitis A during an outbreak
  - » as pre-exposure protection for people who are at a higher risk of getting Hepatitis A, including:
    - ▶ men who have sex with men
    - ▶ people with HIV
    - ▶ people with substance use issues
    - ▶ children living with a person who has a higher risk of getting Hepatitis A

## CAUTION

### Who should NOT receive Hepatitis A vaccine?

- People who have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose or any component of Hepatitis A vaccine.
- People who are sick or have a fever (temperature of 38.5°C/101.3°F or greater).

***People should stay in the clinic for at least 15 minutes after receiving any type of immunization to monitor possible reaction. As with any vaccine there is a slight possibility that a more serious reaction could occur.***

### What are the possible side effects of the Hepatitis A vaccine?

- Some people may have soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site.
- Other side effects—like a slight fever, headache, generally feeling unwell, or gastrointestinal symptoms—are uncommon.

***Over-the-counter pain relievers such as ibuprofen (e.g., Advil) and acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) can be used to manage symptoms following vaccination, including fever. Some people should not take these medications. Talk to your health care provider or pharmacist if you have questions, or are unsure if you should take these.***

### Call your health care provider if:

- You have a fever of 38.5°C (101.3°F) or higher.
- The fever lasts longer than 24 hours.
- Your fever doesn't come down after acetaminophen or ibuprofen are taken.
- You are ill with other symptoms.

### Questions?

If you have any questions about Hepatitis A or the Hepatitis A vaccine, please contact your local Public Health office (see list of offices here: [www.nshealth.ca/public-health-offices](http://www.nshealth.ca/public-health-offices)), or your health care provider.

For more information on immunization, please visit the websites of

- Nova Scotia Health, Public Health at <https://www.nshealth.ca/public-health/immunizations>
- Immunize Canada at [immunize.ca/en/default.aspx](http://immunize.ca/en/default.aspx)
- the Public Health Agency of Canada at [phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://phac-aspc.gc.ca)
- 811 at <https://811.novascotia.ca/>