

Hepatitis A Vaccine

Vaccines have saved more lives in Canada in the last 60 years than any other medical intervention. Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.

Hepatitis A is a vaccine preventable disease.

- **Hepatitis A (HA)** is a virus that infects the liver. For every 1,000 people infected, 1 to 3 could die. In adults 50 years and older, 18 out of 1,000 cases can die.
- There is no known cure or specific treatment for HA infection as it is a self-limiting disease. 25% of adults with HA are hospitalized.
- HA is spread through the fecal-oral route:
 - By ingesting contaminated food or water (e.g., through food preparation by infected food handlers);
 - From direct person-to-person contact; or
 - From contamination of the environment or objects (e.g., on counter tops and on dishes) as the HA virus may remain infectious in the environment for several weeks.
- People who eat or drink with or use the same bathrooms as a person who is infectious with HA are at high risk of becoming infected themselves.
- HA can be spread by sexual contact or through sharing of equipment used for drug use such as straws or pipes.

What are the symptoms of HA?

- The time between becoming infected and developing symptoms is 15 to 50 days.
- Symptoms usually last from 1-2 weeks, but may last for months and include:
 - Fatigue, fever, loss of appetite and nausea.
 - Jaundice (yellow colouring of the skin and whites of the eyes).
 - Dark-colour urine and light colour stools.
- Some infected persons may not develop any symptoms but can still spread the HA virus.
- Cases are infectious 2 weeks before they start developing symptoms and for 1 week after developing jaundice.

How can HA be prevented?

- Be immunized. When you / your child get immunized, you help protect others as well.
- Practice good hygiene (e.g. handwashing).

Who can get this vaccine for free?

- HA case contacts 6 months and older who are identified within 14 days of an exposure.
- Children aged 1-15 years living in northern health regions or on reserves in Saskatchewan (excluded: Creighton, Air Ronge and La Ronge).
- Liver transplant candidates or recipients.
- Haematopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT) recipients.
- Non-immune individuals with bleeding disorders and others who receive repeated infusions of blood or blood products or plasma-derived replacement clotting factors.
- Individuals who have chronic liver disease (including alcoholism, hepatitis C, hepatitis B, cirrhosis) who are non-immune to HA.
- Men who have sex with men.
- Individuals that use or share illicit drug snorting, smoking or injection equipment.
- Sexual partners and household contacts of individuals who use illicit drugs.

Who should not get this vaccine?

- **A mild illness, with or without fever, is not a reason to avoid immunizations.**
- Persons who have a serious illness, with or without a fever, should delay immunization.
- Persons who have had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of a HA containing vaccine, or any components of the vaccine.
- Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should inform their nurse or doctor before receiving the vaccine.

What are common reactions to this vaccine?

- **Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get this vaccine than to get HA.**
- Temporary soreness, redness and swelling at the injection site.
- Headache, fatigue, fever, and stomach upset may also occur after getting the vaccine.
- These reactions are mild and generally last 1 to 2 days.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis.

This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. **If**

this happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.

This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in one million people who get the vaccine.



Who should you report reactions to?

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your doctor, or nurse practitioner as soon as possible.

Talk to a public health nurse:

- If you have questions or concerns about your or your child's reaction to an immunization.
- If you had to take your child to a doctor, a hospital or to a health centre with a symptom that might be related to immunization.

For more information contact your local public health office, your physician, nurse practitioner, HealthLine online or by calling 811.

Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents/guardians discuss consent for immunization with their children. Efforts are first made to get parental/guardian consent for immunizations. However, children at least 13 years of age up to and including 17 years of age, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risks of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations in Saskatchewan by providing mature minor informed consent to a healthcare provider.

What does this vaccine contain?

AVAXIM® and AVAXIM® PEDIATRIC contain inactivated hepatitis A virus (GBM strain), 2-phenoxyethanol, formaldehyde, aluminum hydroxide (expressed as aluminum), Medium 199 Hanks in water for injection, polysorbate 80, neomycin is present in trace amounts. Thimerosal-free. Latex-free.

HAVRIX® 1440 and HAVRIX® 720 contain formaldehyde-inactivated hepatitis A virus aluminum hydroxide, amino acids for injection, disodium phosphate, monopotassium phosphate, neomycin sulphate, polysorbate 20, potassium chloride, sodium chloride and water for injection. May contain traces of bovine serum albumin. Thimerosal-free. Latex-free.

VAQTA® contains inactivated hepatitis A virus protein, aluminum hydroxyphosphate sulfate, sodium chloride, sodium borate, water for injection, neomycin, bovine albumin, and formaldehyde. Thimerosal-free. Latex is present in the vial stopper.

To ensure that a complete immunization record is maintained, every immunization administered to an individual will be documented by Public Health into the electronic provincial immunization registry, known as Panorama. Panorama is a secure electronic system used in Saskatchewan to record and manage immunization records and the health information related to immunization for all Saskatchewan residents. Immunization records may be shared with other health care professionals to provide public health services; assist with diagnosis and treatment; and to control the spread of vaccine preventable diseases. Information about Panorama is detailed in the "Protecting the Privacy of Your Immunization Record" fact sheet.

References: Product monographs (AVAXIM® 2015; AVAXIM® PEDIATRIC 2015; HAVRIX® 2016; VAQTA® 2013).