Hepatitis A Disease

WHAT IS HEPATITIS A?

- Hepatitis A is a contagious liver infection caused by a virus.
- Hepatitis A only occurs as a new infection, and does not become chronic.
- There is no cure for hepatitis A, but your healthcare provider may treat the symptoms.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HEPATITIS A?

- Symptoms of Hep A may include:
  - Fever
  - Feeling tired
  - Decreased appetite
  - Nausea and/or vomiting
  - Stomach pain or discomfort
- Usually occur 15–50 days after being exposed to the virus.
- If you have any of the symptoms, please consult with your healthcare provider immediately.

HOW DOES HEPATITIS A SPREAD?

- Hepatitis A virus is spread by the infected people’s contaminated objects, food, drinks, and feces (poop).
- Person-to-person contact
  - An infected person who does not wash his or her hands properly after going to the bathroom and touches other objects, food, or drink.
  - A parent or caregiver who does not properly wash hands after changing diapers or cleaning up the stool of an infected person.
  - Someone who has anal or oral sex with an infected person.
  - During high-risk situations like using streets drugs, homelessness, and/or men having sex with men (MSM).
- Contaminated food or water
  - Eating or drinking food or water contaminated with the virus, which may include ready-to-eat food.
  - The food and drinks most likely to be contaminated are fruits, vegetables, shellfish, ice, and water.

HOW DO I PROTECT MYSELF AND MY FAMILY?

- Hepatitis A vaccine and proper hand washing are the only ways to prevent getting the virus.
WHO SHOULD GET THE HEPATITIS A VACCINE?

• All children at age 1 year
• Anyone who is at increased risk for infection, including those who have
  • Chronic liver disease
  • Clotting factor disorders
  • Used street drugs
  • Been homeless or in transient living
  • Had direct contact with someone with hepatitis A
  • Traveled outside of the United States
  • A man who has sex with men
• Persons who are at increased risk for complications from hepatitis A
• Any person wishing to obtain immunity (protection)

WHICH VACCINE SHOULD I GET?

• For people aged 1 year of age and older, there are two vaccines that protect against hepatitis A disease. Two doses are needed, given at least 6 months apart.
• For people aged 18 years of age and older, there is one combination vaccine that protects against hepatitis A and B disease. Three doses are needed for full protection.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS AND RISKS?

• Vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing side effects.
• Most people do not have any side effects from the vaccine, but common minor problems include:
  • Soreness or swelling where the shot was given
  • Fever
  • Headache
  • Tiredness
• The risk of the hepatitis A vaccine causing serious harm or death is extremely rare.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

• Ask your healthcare provider or county health department.
• Email the Alabama Department of Public Health, Immunization Division, at immunization@adph.state.al.us or call 1-800-469-4599.
• Go to cdc.gov and type ‘Hepatitis A’ and/or ‘Hepatitis A vaccine’ in the SEARCH box.