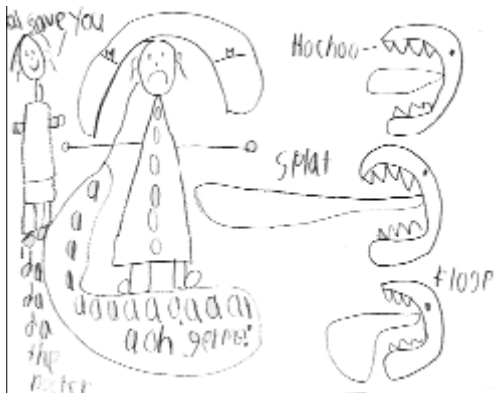


Parents' Guide to Childhood Immunization

Hepatitis

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. Until 2004 it was the most frequently reported type of hepatitis in the United States. Disease rates have been dropping since 1995, when a vaccine was licensed. There are now estimated to be about 20,000 cases a year in the United States. The virus is found mainly in bowel movements and is spread through personal contact or by eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water. Children under 6 often don't show any signs of illness, but for older children signs include fever, loss of appetite, tiredness, stomach pain, vomiting, dark urine, and yellow skin or eyes (jaundice). Hepatitis A does not cause long-term illness or permanent liver damage, but about 100 people die each year from liver failure caused by severe hepatitis A.



Hepatitis A Vaccine

Vaccine Hepatitis A vaccine is made from inactivated (killed) hepatitis A virus. It is 94%–100% effective in preventing hepatitis A. Because it has been available only since 1995, we don't know yet how long immunity will last, but mathematical modeling suggests that it should protect for 20 years or more. The vaccine is not licensed for children younger than 1 year of age. Until late 2005 hepatitis A vaccine was recommended only for certain children: those who live in states where risk of hepatitis A is highest and those who live in communities with high levels of hepatitis A, including Alaska Native villages, American Indian reservations, some Hispanic communities, and some religious communities. Travelers to countries where the disease is common should also get the vaccine. As of 2005 hepatitis A vaccine has been routinely recommended for all children from 12 through 23 months of age. Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine are recommended, the second dose given at least 6 months after the first. For travelers who don't have time to get the second dose before their departure, one dose provides good short-term protection.

Hepatitis A Vaccine Side Effects

Mild local reactions, like pain or swelling where the shot is given, are reported in up to half of people who get the vaccine. Fatigue or mild fever are reported less often—fewer than 1 person in 10. No serious reactions have been associated with the vaccine.

Hepatitis A Vaccine Precautions

In addition to the normal precautions for all vaccines, shown on page 30, children who are known to have a severe allergy to yeast should not get hepatitis A vaccine.

http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hepa/downloads/pg_why_vacc_hepa.pdf