VaxWorks
health services + training

Hepatitis A vaccine

Information Sheet

Hepatitis A is a contagious infection of the liver. Vaccination is safe, highly effective and usually requires two doses.

Key points

- Hepatitis A spreads when tiny amounts of infected faeces (poo) enter the mouth, often through contaminated food or water, poor hand hygiene or close contact.
- Most adults who catch it become unwell. Illness can be more serious in older adults and people with liver disease.
- The vaccine cannot cause hepatitis A. Most adults need two doses, at least 6 months apart.

What is hepatitis A

Hepatitis A causes an acute liver infection. It does not cause long-term infection, and most people recover completely, but illness can sometimes be severe. Symptoms can include fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, dark urine, pale bowel motions and jaundice (yellow skin or eyes).

Who should be vaccinated

Anyone who wants protection can discuss vaccination with their provider. It is particularly recommended for:

- early childhood educators and carers
- disability carers;
- plumbers and sewage workers
- Selected people in rural or remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland, the Northern Territory, South Australia or Western Australia
- people travelling to countries where hepatitis A is common
- people with chronic liver disease, chronic hepatitis B or C, a liver transplant, or a developmental disability
- people who have anal sex, inject drugs, or are in correctional facilities

How well does the vaccine work

Nearly everyone develops protective antibodies after vaccination, and clinical trials show protection approaching 100%.

How many doses are needed

Most adults need two doses. The second is given at least 6 months after the first; exact timing depends on the brand. If it is late, do not restart - complete the remaining dose when you can.

Routine boosters are not needed after a complete course. Combined hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine uses a different schedule.

Which vaccines contain hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A vaccines available for adults in Australia include:

- Havrix 1440
- Avaxim; and
- Vaqta Adult
- Twinrix protects against both hepatitis A and hepatitis B and uses a different vaccination schedule.

The vaccine offered may depend on your age, medical history, previous doses and product availability.

Tell your provider before vaccination

Tell your provider if you have had a severe allergic reaction to a hepatitis A vaccine or an ingredient; have a latex allergy; are pregnant or breastfeeding; are very unwell or have a temperature of 38.5°C or higher; or have a condition or treatment that affects your immune system.

A mild illness without a high fever is usually not a reason to delay. The vaccine is not routinely recommended during pregnancy or breastfeeding, but it can be given when necessary, after discussing the benefits and risks.

Possible reactions

Most reactions are mild and short-lived. Injection-site pain is reported by up to 60% of adults, headache by about 15%, and tiredness or feeling unwell by about 5%. Mild fever may also occur. Serious reactions are very rare.

Allergic reactions and when to seek help

Remain at the vaccination location for 15 minutes. Anaphylaxis is very rare but serious. Call 000 for difficulty breathing, tongue or throat swelling, wheezing, persistent dizziness or collapse. For a serious or unexpected reaction, seek medical advice and contact VaxWorks.

If you may have been exposed

Seek medical advice as soon as possible. Vaccine or normal human immunoglobulin may help prevent illness when given within 2 weeks of exposure.

Reference: Australian Immunisation Handbook - Hepatitis A (updated 22 January 2026).

This information sheet was reviewed by VaxWorks Health Services - October 2026.