

Hepatitis A Vaccine

What is the hepatitis A vaccine?

The hepatitis A vaccine protects against infection from the hepatitis A virus. It is approved by Health Canada for use in individuals who are 6 months of age and older. The vaccine is not given to all babies, children, or adults in New Brunswick. However, individuals may have already received hepatitis A vaccine for travel, work or other reasons. The hepatitis A vaccine is available as a single vaccine or in combination with hepatitis B (combined hepatitis A & B vaccine).

What are the benefits of the vaccine?

Hepatitis A vaccine is the best way to protect against hepatitis A infection and its complications.

How is the vaccine given?

Hepatitis A vaccine is given in the muscle (thigh of babies and upper arm of older children and adults).

Who should receive the hepatitis A vaccine?

- People who have been in close contact with a case of hepatitis A (e.g. eating food prepared by an infected person).
- People with lifestyle risks for getting hepatitis A virus such as drug use, and men who have sex with men.
- Travelers to countries where hepatitis A disease is common.
- Those who live in communities where the risk of hepatitis A is high.
- Those with specific jobs that increase their chance of coming in contact with the virus, such as food handlers, laundry workers, military, zookeepers, humanitarian workers, certain researchers.

A single dose of hepatitis A vaccine can be effective if given within 14 days after being exposed to the virus.

Vaccines for travel and work must be purchased as they are not part the publicly funded vaccines in New Brunswick. Talk to your public health nurse or health care provider for more information.

Who should NOT receive the hepatitis A vaccine?

- People who have had a **severe allergic reaction** to a previous dose of hepatitis A vaccine OR to any ingredients of the vaccine or its container.
- People who have received a complete series of single hepatitis A vaccine (2 doses) or combined hepatitis A & B vaccine (3 doses).
- Infants less than 6 months of age.

What are the possible reactions after receiving the vaccine?

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get hepatitis A. Common reactions to the vaccine may include soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given. 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 severe, life-threatening allergic reaction.** Should this reaction occur, your health care provider is prepared to treat it.

What can be done for reactions to the vaccine?

A cold towel/cloth at the site where the vaccine was given may reduce discomfort. For discomfort and fever, you may also use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or Ibuprofen (Advil®) according to the manufacturer's directions. Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin®) is **NOT recommended** for children and adolescents less than 18 years old because of its link to Reye's syndrome.

What else do we need to know?

- Inform your immunization provider if you or your child has any health problems or allergies. Your immunization provider will give you a record of you or your child's immunization. Keep this record in a safe place and bring it with you the next time you or your child is immunized.
- If you or your child has any unusual reaction(s) to the vaccine, or if you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your healthcare provider.

Further Information

For further information contact your health care providers, local [Public Health office](#) or Tele-Care (811).

Useful websites:

Government of New-Brunswick www.gnb.ca/health

Public Health Agency of Canada www.phac-aspc.gc.ca

Immunize Canada <https://www.immunize.ca>