

# INFORMATION SHEETS

## VACCINATION AGAINST HEPATITIS A VIRUS

- **What is Hepatitis B and how is it passed on and how could it affect me?**

Hepatitis A is a virus that attacks the liver and it can cause a range of illness from mild through non specific nausea and vomiting through to hepatitis (liver inflammation, jaundice, or icterus) and rarely liver failure. Symptoms and severity of the illness are generally worse the older the person is when they become infected.

It is normally spread by food or drink that contain the virus (though poor hygiene) bathing, brushing teeth or swimming in contaminated water (poor water purification and improper/poor waste disposal), but can also be spread occasionally through blood. Infection is prevented by good hygiene, especially hand washing, safe drinking water and food. Vaccination, passive or active, can be used to prevent groups at high risk including people who have been in contact with someone else who has the infection and travellers to countries where the infection is common.

- **Am I at risk?**

The first line of defence against any infection is following Infection Control and Health and Safety Policies.

Only a few occupations in GB are considered to put you at risk, most vaccinations are given for travel abroad.

- **Will the vaccine make me unwell?**

There is always the potential of reaction. These are:

**Common** – 1 in 10 to 1 in 100; Mild pain at the injection site, generally feeling weak, pain in the muscles and joints, headache, feeling or being sick, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, stomach ache, mild fever.

**Uncommonly** – less than 1 in 100: Redness around the injection site.

**Rare** – less than 1 in 1000; A lump at the injection site

**Occasionally** – mild and temporary changes in some blood test that measure how the liver is working.

**Very rare** – less than 1 in 10000; Lumpy and itchy rashes, anaphylaxis.

- **How many injections do I need?**

The initial vaccine gives 12 months protection and is suitable for one off holidays in 'at risk' areas.

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A second vaccine, after 6 months but before 36 months gives 10 (to 20) years protection. Please see the information about immunity on the next page

- **What vaccine will I be given?**

The Royal United Occupational Health mainly use Avaxim 0.5 ml injected intra-muscularly.

- **Can everybody have the vaccine?**

Occasionally it is not suitable for people to have the vaccine, please see the contra-indications below

- **Contra-indications**

You should not have the vaccine if you have any of the following:

- Previous allergy to Hepatitis A vaccination.
- Known hypersensitivity to any of the components including:-aluminium hydroxide, formaldehyde, hydrochloric acid, mineral salts, neomycin, phenylalanine, 2-phenoxyethanol, polysorbate 80, sodium hydroxide and vitamins
- History of signs of hypersensitivity after a previous vaccination
- History of Hepatitis A infection
- Current viral infection
- Current fever or infection
- History of Liver disease or damage
- If you are currently pregnant

Reduced immune response caused by disease or treatment can reduce the efficiency of the vaccine but does not necessarily exclude vaccination.

If you have haemophilia, or any other condition that means you cannot have the injection into a muscle you will have to see a doctor.

- **What will happen if I refuse the vaccine(s)?**


The nurse will review with you what HAV is, how it is passed on, how it could affect you. You will be able to change your mind and have the vaccine at a later date.

If the vaccine is recommended for work your manager may be notified that you have refused the vaccine as it could put you at risk of contracting the infection.

This will also apply to those who cannot have the vaccine

- **How will I know if I am immune to Hepatitis**

When you are given the vaccine your body's natural defences will start to produce protection against the virus, it usually takes about 14 days before you will be protected.



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There is no guaranteed immunity with any vaccine and Avaxim cannot completely protect against the infection and does not offer lifelong immunity.

- **References**

Immunisation against infectious disease – The green book (DoH)