

Hepatitis A

INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Since fall 2021, an increasing number of cases of hepatitis A have been identified in some Nunavik communities. In order to avoid the spreading of this disease, it is recommended that people who aren't adequately protected receive the vaccine against hepatitis A.

Who should get vaccinated?

In the past, several vaccination campaigns against hepatitis A have occurred in Nunavik (e.g. years 1997 and 2002). Since 2018, the hepatitis A vaccine is given to children in grade 4 and, more recently, to children of 18 months of age.

For that reasons, many Nunavimmiut are today considered protected against this disease. However, there are reasons to believe that some **children under 9 years old** and some adults (particularly those **who were born between 1970 and 1981**) are not. These people should receive the vaccine as soon as possible.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is an infection caused by a virus that attacks the liver.

What are the signs and symptoms of hepatitis A?

Most preschoolers have few or no symptoms.

Among older children and adults, the following symptoms may appear:

- **Fever**
- **Abdominal discomfort**
- **General discomfort**
- **Jaundice**
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Dark urine (colour of Coca-Cola)**
- **Nausea and vomiting**
- **Pale stools**

How does the disease spread?

The virus is present in the stools of the infected individual. It can spread through:

- Consumption of contaminated water or food and drink;
- Contact with contaminated objects (e.g., toys).

It can also spread during sexual relations with an infected person.

An infected person must not prepare food or drinks for others, provide care or attend day-care.

Persons with hepatitis A but without symptoms can still spread the infection.

How is hepatitis A prevented?

The **vaccine** is the most effective way to avoid developing the disease after contact with the hepatitis A virus.

The vaccine against hepatitis A gives a very long lasting protection and is close to 100% effective. 1 dose is usually needed for children, and 2 doses for adults.

This vaccine has been used for several decades all over the world, it is safe.

Main reactions that can occur after receiving the vaccine are generally not serious, of short duration and do not require any medical intervention (quite often pain, swelling or redness at the injection site; often a fever, headache, discomfort, fatigue, nausea or vomiting may also occur).

The disease can also be prevented by following the usual **hygiene measures**:

BY WASHING HANDS:

- **After using the toilet or helping a child use the toilet;**
 - **After changing a child's diaper;**
 - **Before handling food;**
 - **After handling raw eggs, meat and poultry;**
 - **After touching an animal or its environment;**
 - **Before eating.**
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- By frequently cleaning and disinfecting contaminated surfaces (changing tables, toilets, bathroom countertops and taps, toys).

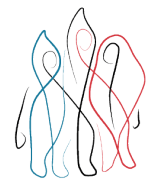
P.O. Box 900

Kuujuaq QC J0M 1C0

Tel.: 819-964-2222 / 1-844-964-2244

Fax: 819-964-2814

Website: www.nrbhss.gouv.qc.ca



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