

## What is Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable liver disease caused by the Hepatitis A virus (HAV). It can make a person feel very tired and have a fever, upset stomach, and loss of appetite. People with the virus can have yellow skin and eyes (jaundice). Some people never know they have Hepatitis A because they don't always get sick but can still pass the virus on to others.

Hepatitis B is a vaccine-preventable liver disease caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV). Many people who become infected with HBV never feel sick and recover completely. Others get a brief, acute illness with tiredness, fever, loss of appetite and jaundice (yellow skin and eyes). Less than 5% of adults who get acute hepatitis B develop chronic hepatitis, which can lead to cirrhosis (liver scarring) and/or liver cancer later in life. People with acute and chronic Hepatitis B disease can pass the infection on to others. Chronic hepatitis B infection is not curable but can be managed by your health care provider.

## How are Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis A can be spread through contact with an infected person's feces (i.e. bowel movement) or by drinking or eating contaminated food or water. For these reasons proper hand washing after using the washroom and before touching food is very important. Hepatitis A can also pass from person-to-person through some forms of sexual contact. People who inject drugs are also at risk.

Hepatitis B can be spread by close contact with blood and body fluids such as blood, semen, and vaginal fluid of an infected person. You may risk exposure to hepatitis B through unprotected sex, tattoos, piercings, pedicures, manicures or medical procedures with improperly sterilized equipment, sharing personal hygiene items with an infected person (e.g. razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers). In one third of people that cause the spread of disease are never identified. A mother may also pass the virus on to her baby during childbirth.

## Why do we recommend vaccination for Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B?

Vaccination is the best protection against Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. The complete vaccination schedule for the combined Hepatitis A and B vaccine consists of 3 scheduled doses over a six month period. Good hand hygiene is also important in preventing these diseases.

## Who should NOT get Hepatitis A and B combined vaccine?

Anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of this vaccine or any of its contents should not receive this vaccine.

## Is Hepatitis A and B combined vaccine safe?

All vaccines recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Provincial Department of Health and Community Services such as this one are safe and effective.

## What are common side effects of the vaccine?

Common side effects include soreness, swelling and/or redness at the injection site, slight fever, headache, tiredness or irritability. Serious side effects are rare and should be reported to the community/public health nurse.

For additional information and  
services contact the Regional Health  
Authority in your community