

Hepatitis A Vaccine

Benefits

Protects against infections by Hepatitis A,

which can cause nausea, vomiting, fever, jaundice, acute liver failure, and death.

The disease typically lasts for about 8 weeks, though it can last for up to a year.

Keeps others safe: some people cannot get vaccines due to allergies or other issues.

Side effects

1 in 6 children will have mild side effects such as redness or soreness for where the shot was given, 1 in 25 will have a headache lasting 1-2 days after getting the vaccine, and 1 in 12 will have a loss of appetite. These side effects all last between 1-2 days. Fewer than 1 in 1 million have an allergic reaction to the vaccine.

Concerns

Can the Hepatitis A vaccine cause hepatitis?

No, the vaccine only contains a dead part of the Hepatitis A virus. This helps the body recognize and fight Hepatitis A infection in the future, but it cannot cause the disease.

If Hepatitis A is no longer common in the United States, why does my child need the shot?

Though there are fewer cases now, some unvaccinated children still get sick from Hepatitis A every year. There are about 2,700 cases of Hepatitis A and 50-100 deaths from Hepatitis A in the US each year.

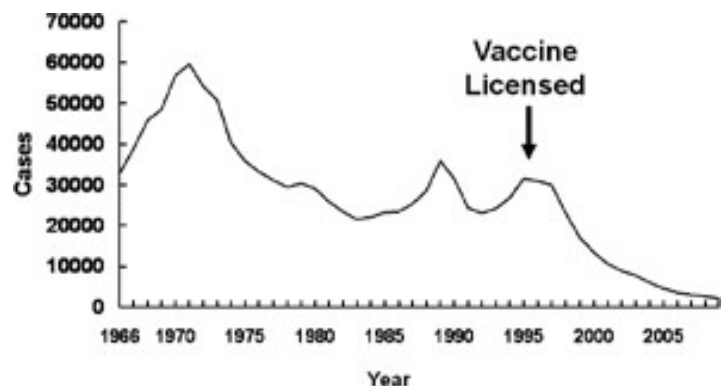
Does the Hepatitis A vaccine contain aluminum, formaldehyde, mercury, or thimerosal?

The Hepatitis A vaccine does contain a small amount (0.25 mg) of aluminum, which is about as much as a week's worth of breastmilk or a day's worth of formula. The vaccine contains 0.05 mg of formaldehyde, which is a naturally occurring substance and is not harmful at that level. An infant has 20 times this amount of formaldehyde circulating in his or her bloodstream naturally. The Hepatitis A vaccine does not contain mercury or thimerosal.

Where does the Hepatitis A vaccine come from?

The Hepatitis A vaccine manufacturing process involves a line of fetal stem cells. This cell line originated in the 1960's, and the cells are still being produced from that original cell line from 50+ years ago. The vaccine does not contain any human cells.

Cases of Hepatitis A in the US, 1966-2009



Do any of the sources used in this handout have ties to pharmaceutical companies?

The sources used for this handout are the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHoP). While some employees at the CDC and CHoP have ties to pharmaceutical companies, both of those organizations are up-front about these connections. The CDC in particular took steps in 2006 to make its vaccine recommendation unit more independent and less subject to bias.

References:

<http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-safety/vaccine-ingredients/fetal-tissues.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/Hepatitis/A/aFAQ.htm#overview>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/hepa.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/side-effects.htm#hepa>

<http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/a-look-at-each-vaccine/hepatitis-a-vaccine.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/Statistics/2011Surveillance/Commentary.htm#hepA>

<http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-safety/vaccine-ingredients/aluminum.html>

<http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-safety/vaccine-ingredients/formaldehyde.html>

Written by:

Nathan Potter, Tufts University School of Medicine Class of 2017;

Wayne Altman, MD, Associate Professor of Family Medicine, Tufts University School of Medicine.