



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Get Your Hep A Vaccine

Hepatitis A Vaccination Coverage Among Children Aged 12–23 Years — United States, 2006–2009

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Hepatitis A is a contagious disease of the liver that can last from a few weeks to six months. You can get it by consuming contaminated food or water or coming in contact with a person who has the infection. Since the development of a vaccine in the mid-1990s, the number of hepatitis A cases has decreased. However, a recent CDC report found that the number of persons getting the vaccine has leveled off.

Dr. Trudy Murphy is a physician with CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of getting the hepatitis A vaccine. Welcome to the show, Trudy.

[Dr. Murphy] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Trudy, tell us a little bit about hepatitis A and its symptoms.

[Dr. Murphy] Hepatitis A is a serious viral infection of the liver. The symptoms can be quite severe in adults. They can include nausea, abdominal pain, vomiting, and a general fatigue that can last anywhere from several weeks to six months. Along with the symptoms, the skin can turn yellow and so can the eyes, and at the same time, the urine will be dark colored and stool - very light colored. One in three adults with the infection will be hospitalized for hepatitis A, and adults 50 years and older are particularly susceptible to severe infection. Two percent will develop acute liver failure and die from the infection. By contrast, children have very mild infection. In fact, we don't even know that they have the infection much of the time, but they are excellent at transmitting the infection to adults and other people around them.

[Dr. Gaynes] How is hepatitis A treated?

[Dr. Murphy] The treatment for hepatitis A depends on supporting a person who is ill with good nutrition, rest, and fluids. Because there is no specific antiviral medication, this supportive treatment is very important. But it's even more important to prevent the infection by vaccination.

[Dr. Gaynes] When should a person be vaccinated?

[Dr. Murphy] Well, anyone can have hepatitis A vaccine if they want to be protected, however, the vaccine is recommended for people who are at most risk of having the infection, and those include some special groups, including travelers and people who have liver disease or clotting disorders. But the best time to be vaccinated is in infancy, before a person is likely to have

symptoms if they get the infection. And vaccinating infants also helps to prevent transmission of the infection to other people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Trudy, how many doses of the hepatitis A vaccine are required?

[Dr. Murphy] For a person to be fully protected against hepatitis A, two doses are necessary. The first dose is recommended for infants at 12 months and the second dose, six months later. The second dose is really important for long-lasting protection. Remember that hepatitis A is not gone from the United States and both doses are necessary for full protection.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about the hepatitis A vaccine?

[Dr. Murphy] Information about any of the hepatitis viruses can be found at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Trudy. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Trudy Murphy about the importance of getting the hepatitis A vaccine.

Remember, the vaccine is recommended for all children aged 12–23 months, and two doses are necessary for lasting protection against the disease. Check your vaccination records or ask your healthcare provider to ensure your child has been appropriately vaccinated against hepatitis A.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.