Hepatitis A Vaccine

This sheet is about exposure to the hepatitis A vaccine in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information is based on published research studies. It should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare providers.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is an infection caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). Hepatitis A spreads among people very easily. The virus infects the liver. Hepatitis A is the most common cause of jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes) in women who are pregnant. Unlike other forms of hepatitis, hepatitis A does not cause chronic (long-term) liver problems. For more information on hepatitis A, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at: https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/hepatitis-a/.

What is the hepatitis A vaccine?

The hepatitis A vaccine contains an inactivated (not live) hepatitis A virus. The vaccine causes a person to develop antibodies to the virus and protects them against hepatitis A infection in the future. The vaccine does not cause hepatitis A. The hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for all children at 1 year of age, and for individuals, including pregnant women, that are traveling to countries where hepatitis A is common. It has also been recommended for some individuals working in professions with a high chance of exposure to the virus, and people who have other risk factors such as clotting disorders, chronic liver disease, or those who use certain drugs.

How can I lower the chance of getting hepatitis A?

The hepatitis A vaccine provides the best protection against the virus. The vaccine is thought to be effective for up to 20 years. A blood test is available to find out if a person has hepatitis A antibodies. If they do not, they can talk with their healthcare provider about their risk factors for hepatitis A and decide if vaccination is right for them.

In addition, practicing good hygiene can lower the chance of infection. This includes washing hands with soap and water after using the bathroom, after changing a diaper, and before preparing and eating food. Boiling contaminated food or water for one minute can kill the virus.

Does receiving the hepatitis A vaccine make it harder to get pregnant?

It is not known if receiving the hepatitis A vaccine can make it harder to get pregnant.

Does receiving the hepatitis A vaccination increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Receiving the hepatitis A vaccination is not expected to increase the chance of miscarriage.

Does receiving the hepatitis A vaccine in pregnancy increase the chance of birth defects?

Birth defects can happen in any pregnancy for different reasons. Out of all babies born each year, about 3 out of 100 (3%) will have a birth defect. We look at research studies to try to understand if an exposure, like hepatitis A vaccine, might increase the chance of birth defects in a pregnancy. Inactivated vaccines, like the hepatitis A vaccine are not thought to pose a risk to a fetus.

Does receiving the hepatitis A vaccine during pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?

One study suggested a possible increased chance for babies to be small for gestational age. Other studies have suggested that the hepatitis A vaccine would not cause pregnancy-related problems, such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces [2500 grams] at birth).

Does receiving the hepatitis A vaccine in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for

the child?
Several studies have not found that receiving hepatitis A vaccine in pregnancy increase the chance for behavior or learning issues for the child.

Breastfeeding if I receive the hepatitis A vaccine:
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that getting the hepatitis A vaccine is not a reason to stop breastfeeding. Breastfeeding also does not affect how well the vaccine works. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

If a man receives the hepatitis A vaccine, could it affect his fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?
Studies have not been done to see if the hepatitis A vaccine could affect male fertility (ability to make healthy sperm) or increase the chance of birth defects. In general, exposures that men have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/.

Please click here for references.

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