

Hepatitis Information Sheets

What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis is a disease that affects the liver. Travellers as well as people in general can contract hepatitis. There are many forms of hepatitis. The three most common and well know forms of hepatitis are;

1. Hepatitis A
2. Hepatitis B
3. Hepatitis C

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is the most common vaccine preventable disease in travellers. The disease can be contracted directly from infected persons or via eating or drinking contaminated food and/or water. The symptoms of Hepatitis A include; fever, headache, nausea and vomiting and abdominal cramping. Jaundice (A yellowing of the skin and sclera (the white part of the eyes)) follows a few days later. There is a case fatality rate greater than 2% for persons over 40 years of age. The fatality rate increases with age.

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a vaccination that is now given to children born in Australia as part of their childhood immunisation schedule. The disease can be contracted through contact with blood and bodily fluids of an infected person, unprotected sex and sharing of needles and syringes with infected persons. There is potential risk through other skin puncturing procedures such as tattooing, acupuncture and body piercing. The symptoms of Hepatitis B include; loss of appetite, abdominal cramping, nausea and vomiting and the development of jaundice (A yellowing of the skin and sclera (the white part of the eyes)). There is a case fatality rate of 1% in adults. People who suffer the disease can develop cirrhoses of the liver and/or liver cancer.

What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C is the most serious of the three listed here, as there is not a vaccine available to prevent infection. Hepatitis C can be transmitted via sharing needles and syringes with an infected person, unprotected sex, skin puncturing procedures such as tattooing, acupuncture and body piercing. In the early 1980's blood transfusions were inadvertently transmitting the hepatitis C virus, as the technology to screen the blood for disease was not advanced in detecting this disease. The symptoms of Hepatitis C include; loss of appetite, abdominal cramps, nausea and vomiting and jaundice (A yellowing of the skin and sclera (the white part of the eyes)). Most infected people will develop chronic liver disease and/or cirrhosis.

Can I be vaccinated against any of the Hepatitis diseases?

At the present time, travellers can only be vaccinated against hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. Single injections are available or a combination injection is available.

A Course of two injections is recommended to protect travellers against Hepatitis A. Given at 0 and 6 months.

A course of three vaccinations is recommended to protect travellers from Hepatitis B. Given at 0, 1 and 6 months

If a traveller decides to have the combination vaccine a course of three injections is required for protection against Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. Given at 0, 1, and 6 months.

If you do not know wether you have been immunized or if you did not finish a course of vaccinations...

We can perform a blood analysis to check if you have the required level of antibodies in your blood. This takes about 3 days. If the results show that your antibody level is low we will be able to administer a booster or re-start the vaccination course.

What do I do if I travel before I finish the course?

A rapid schedule exists for travellers who want the maximum coverage prior to travel. Given at 0, 1, 2 and 12 months. You will notice that there is an extra vaccine needed.

How much does the vaccination cost?

For only Hepatitis A vaccination each injection is \$75.00 (Incl GST)

For only Hepatitis B vaccination each injection is \$25.00 (Incl GST)

For the combination Hepatitis A & B vaccination each injection is \$80.00 (Incl GST)

Who can have the vaccination?

The adult dose vaccinations can be given to persons over 15 years of age.

The children dose vaccinations can be given to children between 1 – 15 years of age.