

VACCINATION

Hepatitis A and B:

People infected with hepatitis C should be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, if not already immune, regardless of the severity of the liver damage. Your Physician can determine if you are already protected against these viruses with simple blood tests.

Two hepatitis A vaccines are licensed in the United States for use in persons over 12 months of age: HAVRIX® (manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline) and VAQTA® (manufactured by Merck & Co., Inc.). Likewise, there are currently two hepatitis B vaccines available in the United States: Recombivax HB® (Merck & Co.) and Engerix-B® (GlaxoSmithKline).

TWINRIX® (GlaxoSmithKline) is a combination hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine licensed for persons over 18 years of age. In 2001, the vaccine was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on the same schedule as the hepatitis B vaccine. In 2007, FDA approved an additional accelerated dosing schedule for the combination vaccine. The newest dosing schedule can be administered within 21 days (at 0, 7, 21-30 days), followed by a lifelong booster at 12 months. The accelerated dosing schedule was designed to benefit high risk patients, including those who are HIV positive. If you need protection against both hepatitis A and hepatitis B viruses, you can choose the combination vaccine.

TWINRIX, manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline, is a combined hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine licensed for persons over 18 years of age. The vaccine was first approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2001 on the same schedule as the hepatitis B vaccine. However, in 2007, FDA approved an accelerated dosing schedule for the combination vaccine. The newest dosing schedule can be administered in as little as 21 days (at 0, 7, 21-30 days), followed by a lifelong booster at 12 months. This new accelerated dosing schedule was designed to benefit high risk patients (among other groups), including those who are HIV positive. If you need both vaccines (A and B), you can choose the combination vaccine that will protect you against both viruses.

Side effects, other than slight soreness at the injection site, are uncommon. Information on hepatitis vaccines can be found at the following websites:

www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/hep/default.htm#acip

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/acip/default.htm

www.immunize.org/catg.d/2081ab.htm

Pneumococcal vaccine (pronounced NEU-mo-KOK-al) is recommended for patients with significant liver disease, especially those with cirrhosis. Such patients should receive a single shot of the vaccine. The vaccine protects against serious infections (e.g., Meningitis or pneumonia) from certain types of strep bacteria. It should, however, be pointed out that the vaccine may not work as well in patients with advanced liver disease as compared to in those with healthy livers.