

# Vaccine Information Sheet

## **AVAXIM** – Hepatitis A vaccine

AVAXIM is a vaccine used to help prevent Hepatitis A.

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the Hepatitis A virus (HAV). HAV is found in the stool of people with hepatitis A. It is usually spread by close personal contact and sometimes by eating food or drinking water containing HAV. A person who has hepatitis A can easily pass the disease to others within the same household. Working in the healthcare field can increase the risk of infection.

Hepatitis A can cause:

- “flu-like” illness
- jaundice (yellow skin or eyes, dark urine)
- severe stomach pains and diarrhoea (children)

People with Hepatitis A often have to be hospitalized (up to about 1 person in 5). Adults with hepatitis A are often too ill to work for up to a month. Sometimes, people die as a result of hepatitis A (about 3–6 deaths per 1,000 cases). Hepatitis A vaccine can prevent hepatitis A.

### **What is in the vaccine and how does it work**

The vaccine contains inactivated virus and is injected into the body. The body then produces its own protection by making disease-fighting substances (antibodies) to fight the virus. The vaccine itself cannot cause the infection. If a vaccinated person comes into contact with live virus the body is usually ready and produces antibodies to destroy it. However, as with all vaccines, 100% protection against hepatitis A cannot be guaranteed.

### **How is it given**

Two doses of the vaccine are needed for lasting protection. These doses should be given at least 6 months apart. AVAXIM is given as an injection, usually into your upper arm muscle by a doctor or trained nurse. The usual dose for adults (18 years and older) is 1.0 ml.

Hepatitis A vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

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## **Before you are given AVAXIM**

Anyone who has ever had a severe (life threatening) allergic reaction to a previous dose of hepatitis A vaccine should not get another dose. Anyone who has a severe (life threatening) allergy to any vaccine component should not get the vaccine.

AVAXIM vaccine components include:

- the active ingredient is the Hepatitis A virus protein. The vaccine will not give you the Hepatitis A virus.
- inactive ingredients include aluminium hydroxide; phenoxyethanol; formaldehyde; neomycin (trace).

## **What are the possible side effects of AVAXIM**

A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of AVAXIM causing serious harm is extremely low.

Getting Hepatitis A vaccine is much safer than getting the disease.

The most common adverse events following administration of Hepatitis A vaccines is soreness at the injection site - this is usually mild and of a short duration. About 15% of adults report headache and approximately 5% report malaise or fatigue following vaccination. Other rare side effects include rash, swollen joints and nausea.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These would start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination. Most people have minimal or no side effects.

*If you feel anything that concerns you after your vaccination, contact your GP or Health Direct on 1800 022 222.*

Do not be alarmed by this list of possible side effects. You may not experience any of them.

## **Use of AVAXIM in pregnancy**

Hepatitis A vaccine is not routinely recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women, but can be given where vaccination is considered necessary. Please inform your Manager and this can be discussed with the nurse or Doctor prior to your vaccination date.

After you have had your first dose of AVAXIM, don't forget to follow-up with your second dose 6 months later to ensure you have protective immunity to Hepatitis A.

***As a precaution, after your vaccination, it is recommended that you wait in the vicinity of the immunisation clinic for 15 minutes.***

If you have any other questions, you can discuss these with your nurse on the day of vaccination or contact Work Health Professionals on 9204 1999.

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