



Health Awareness

Experts Unanimously Recommend New Policy To Protect Children Against Serious Disease

(NAPSA)—The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recently voted to recommend universal hepatitis A vaccination to all children in the United States in a single age cohort between 12 to 35 months, with catch-up vaccination through the pre-school years. The new unanimous recommendation encourages pediatricians to vaccinate infants and toddlers against hepatitis A in addition to the already-scheduled vaccinations against hepatitis B, polio, measles, mumps, and whooping cough, among others.

“Comprehensive immunization policies are essential to our nation’s health,” said David Neumann, PhD, Executive Director of the National Partnership for immunization. “Our ability to reduce the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases, like hepatitis A, requires constant vigilance. This ACIP recommendation is an important step in reducing the incidence of hepatitis A nationwide.”

Despite the availability of effective vaccines, hepatitis A remains one of the most commonly reported vaccine-preventable diseases in the country. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hepatitis A incidence rates in children have been among the highest reported because they often come in close contact with other children and easily spread the disease. They

Symptoms of Hepatitis A

- fever
- fatigue
- loss of appetite
- nausea
- abdominal discomfort
- jaundice
- dark urine



can also pass it on to other family members. Expanding childhood vaccination requirements to include hepatitis A can protect communities from the disease through “herd immunity,” i.e., the protection extended to family members and the general community when a large portion of a population is vaccinated. ACIP’s decision to recommend including hepatitis A vaccination for children in the childhood immunization schedule reinforces the need to improve children’s health by reducing the burden of this disease in our country.

About Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. This virus is spread by close personal contact and by eating food or drinking water contaminated with the hepatitis A virus. About one in five people with the disease have to be hospitalized and up to 100 people with the disease may die each year. Symptoms

of the disease can be debilitating and include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal discomfort, jaundice and dark urine. Fortunately, hepatitis A can be prevented through a vaccine that is given in two doses. The first dose can be given starting at 12 months of age or older and the next can be given six to 12 months later.

About the National Partnership for Immunization

The National Partnership for Immunization (NPI) is a non-profit organization that was created in 2000 to encourage greater awareness, acceptance and use of immunization by people of all ages through partnerships with public and private organizations. NPI brings together private and public sector partners, including healthcare provider professional associations, community-based organizations, policymakers, vaccine manufacturers, insurance companies, managed care corporations, hospitals, major employers, healthcare and social service professionals, medical and scientific researchers and public health advocates to improve the effectiveness of public and professional educational and outreach efforts to reduce the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases among children, adolescents and adults. For more information, go to www.partnersforimmunization.org.