

Hepatitis A Fact Sheet

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by a virus. It can cause jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and eyes), fatigue, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhea, and fever. The average time from exposure to when symptoms start is usually 25 to 30 days but can vary. Some infections may not be recognized, and all symptoms may not be present.

How is Hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A is spread from person to person by putting something in the mouth that has been contaminated with the stool (feces) of a person with hepatitis A. For this reason, the virus is more easily spread in areas where there are poor sanitary conditions or where good personal hygiene is not observed.

Most infections result from close contact with a household member or sex partner who has hepatitis A or from infected children in a daycare setting. Casual contact, as in the usual office, factory, or school setting, does not spread the virus.

How can a person prevent this illness?

- The hepatitis A vaccine is the best protection. The vaccine has an excellent safety record. Soreness at the injection site is the most frequently reported side effect.
- Short-term protection against hepatitis A is available from immune globulin. It can be given before and within 2 weeks after coming in contact with HAV.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before preparing or eating food.



Who is Most At Risk of Infection?

- People who live with infected individuals
- Sexual partners of infected persons
- Persons, especially children, living in areas with increased rates of hepatitis A (talk to your doctor or health department if you have any questions)
- Persons traveling to countries where hepatitis A is common (for more information see www.cdc.gov/travel/)
- Men who have sex with men

- Injecting and non-injecting drug users
- Persons with occupational risk
- Persons with chronic liver disease

Vaccine Recommendations

- Men who have sex with men
- Injecting and non-injecting drug users
- Persons with clotting-factor disorders (for example, hemophilia)
- Persons with chronic liver disease
- Children living in areas with increased rates of hepatitis A
- Travelers to areas with increased rates of hepatitis A
- Any healthy person over the age of 2 can receive the vaccine (talk to your doctor)

How are Hepatitis A infections diagnosed and treated?

A blood test is needed to diagnose hepatitis A. Talk to your doctor or someone from your local health department if you suspect that you have been exposed to hepatitis A or any type of viral hepatitis.

Are there long term consequences to a Hepatitis A infection?

Those who have had the virus cannot get it again. There is no long-term infection but there can be consequences for those with liver conditions. About 15% of those infected will have prolonged or relapsing symptoms over a 6-9 month period.

For more information please visit: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/index

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