



Hepatitis A Fact Sheet

HEPATITIS A IS REPORTABLE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BUT WITHIN 24 HOURS. TO REPORT A CASE OF *HEPATITIS A*, CALL 708-836-8699.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis means inflammation or swelling of the liver. Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus that can be spread to other people. Hepatitis A can range in how bad it makes you feel and how long it lasts. It could be a mild illness that lasts a few weeks to a severe illness that lasts many months.

How is it spread?

Hepatitis A can be spread by eating food or drinking water that has feces from an infected person in it. It is common in places where there are poor sanitary conditions or poor personal hygiene. The food and drinks most likely to be contaminated are fruits, vegetables, shellfish, ice, and water. In the United States, water is treated with chlorine that kills hepatitis A virus that gets into the water supply. Hepatitis A can also be spread when a person who is sick with hepatitis A does not wash his or her hands properly after going to the bathroom and then touches other objects or food. A person who is not infected can spread the virus if they change diapers or clean up the feces of an infected person then touch an object or food without washing their hands.

What are the symptoms?

Some people get hepatitis A and have no symptoms of the disease. Adults are more likely to have symptoms than children. If symptoms occur, they usually start anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks after the virus gets in your body. Symptoms can include: fever, feeling tired, not feeling hungry, nausea, vomiting, stomach ache, dark urine, clay-colored stools, joint pain and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and/or eyes).

How is hepatitis A treated?

There are no special treatments for hepatitis A. Most people with hepatitis A will feel sick for a few months before they start to feel better. Some will need to go to the hospital. During this time, doctors usually say you should get rest, eat nutritious foods with lots of vitamins and minerals, and drink plenty of fluids. People with hepatitis A should check with a doctor before taking any medicines, including non-prescription medicines, vitamins or supplements from the store. This is because some medicines and supplements could damage your liver when you have hepatitis A. Do not drink alcohol if you have hepatitis A or you will risk damaging your liver.



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Can hepatitis A be prevented?

Yes. The best way to prevent hepatitis A is through vaccination with the hepatitis A vaccine. Vaccination is recommended for all children, travelers to certain countries, and people at high risk for infection. Washing hands with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, changing diapers or before preparing food can help stop the spread of hepatitis A.

If I have hepatitis A, or someone in my house has hepatitis A, can I go to work or school?

If you touch food as a part of your job, or take care of others as a part of your job (for example, if you work in a nursing home or day care), you cannot go to work for 7 days from when your jaundice started. If you have hepatitis A but you do not have jaundice, you cannot go to work for 2 weeks from the time when your other symptoms started. You do not have to give any stool samples to go back to work. If you just found out that you have hepatitis A, your health department might recommend that the people you live with get vaccinated or get immunoglobulin, something that goes into your blood and helps you fight the disease. Follow all directions provided by the health department.

For more information visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/A/aFAQ.htm#overview>