



HEPATITIS A FACT SHEET

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis A virus. This virus is a gastrointestinal virus. If you have ever had Hepatitis A you can not get it again.

How can you be exposed to the Hepatitis A virus?

Anyone can be exposed to the Hepatitis A virus. Hepatitis A virus is found in the stool of an infected person. The Hepatitis A virus is spread by close personal contact with someone who has the infection. People more likely to have close personal contact with an infected person would be:

- children and adults attending or working in day care centers where an infected person attended or worked
- household contacts of infected persons
- eating food prepared by an infected person
- sex partners of infected persons
- persons traveling in countries where Hepatitis A is common

What are the symptoms of Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A can make you feel like you have the flu. You may have some or all of the following symptoms:

- extreme tiredness
- fever
- nausea and/or vomiting
- stomach pain or diarrhea
- light colored stool or dark, rust colored urine
- jaundice (yellowish eyes and skin)

The disease is rarely fatal and most people recover without any complications after several weeks. Infants and young children tend to have very mild illness or no symptoms at all, however, they are still contagious. People who already have liver problems can become very ill if they get Hepatitis A.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms may appear within 2 to 7 weeks, but usually occur about 4 weeks after exposure. About 15% of who people get Hepatitis A continue to experience symptoms up to 6 months.

How long is a person with Hepatitis A contagious to others?

The contagious period begins about two weeks before and lasts until one week after the person begins to become jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes).

What is the treatment for Hepatitis A?

There are no medicines to treat infection with this virus; however, medicines (over the counter or prescribed) can be used to help with some of the symptoms. Please be sure to follow the medical advice of your health care provider.

How can Hepatitis A be prevented?

You can protect yourself and others from Hepatitis A by washing your hands:

- after using the toilet
- after diapering a baby
- before touching (preparing) or eating food

When traveling in countries where Hepatitis A is common, you should avoid fresh vegetables and fruits and drink only bottled, carbonated drinks (without ice).

A vaccine is available to prevent you from getting Hepatitis A. It is highly recommended for the persons listed below:

- Children between the ages of 12 and 23 months
- Travelers to areas with increased rates of hepatitis A
- Men who have sex with men
- Injecting and non-injecting drug users
- Persons with clotting-factor disorders (e.g. hemophilia)
- Persons with chronic liver disease

Immune globulin (IG) can be used to reduce the risk of disease in close contacts of an infected person. Consult your doctor or local health department for more information.

Where can I get more information on Hepatitis A?

www.cdc.gov

www.liverfoundation.org

www.dshs.state.tx.us

Source of Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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