

## Hepatitis A

### What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis (hep-ah-ty-tis) A is a liver disease. It is caused by infection with the hepatitis A virus.

### Who can get hepatitis A?

Anyone can get hepatitis A. Some people who are at greater risk of getting hepatitis A include:

- People who live with someone who has hepatitis A
- People who work in child care settings
- Children who go to child care
- Men who have sex with men
- People who travel to countries where hepatitis A is common
- People who use street-drugs (injected or non-injected)
- People who are homeless and do not have access to hygienic measures, such as handwashing

People who have recovered from hepatitis A cannot become infected again. They become immune to the virus.

### How is hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A virus is found in the stool of infected people. People become infected with hepatitis A by swallowing the virus. This can happen when infected people do not wash their hands properly after using the bathroom and then touch food that is eaten by someone else.

### What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

People infected with hepatitis A may have no symptoms, or they may have a range of symptoms including:

- Fever
- Tiredness
- Poor appetite
- Dark yellow urine
- Stomach pain
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice)

### How is hepatitis A diagnosed?

Hepatitis A is diagnosed by a blood test that looks for hepatitis A antibodies.

### What is the treatment for hepatitis A?

Most people fully recover on their own within a few weeks. No specific medications, including antibiotics, are used to treat hepatitis A.

**Can people with hepatitis A pass the illness to others?**

An infected person can spread hepatitis A to others as long as the hepatitis A virus is present in his/her stool. This usually begins about 1 to 2 weeks before the onset of jaundice or peak of symptoms if there is no jaundice. There is no chronic (long-term) infection with hepatitis A. People do not become carriers of the hepatitis A virus.

**Is there a vaccine for hepatitis A?**

Yes, there is a vaccine that will prevent someone from getting sick with hepatitis A.

**What should I do if I think I have been exposed to hepatitis A?**

If you think you have been exposed to hepatitis A, see a health care provider right away. Your health care provider may recommend that you receive an injection of hepatitis A vaccine and/or immune globulin. These injections should be given within two weeks of being exposed to the hepatitis A virus. Immune globulin only provides protection for a short-time, it does not provide long-term protection like the hepatitis A vaccine.

**Can hepatitis A turn into hepatitis B or C?**

No, hepatitis A is caused by a different virus from the viruses that cause hepatitis B or C. Also, hepatitis A virus does not turn into the other hepatitis viruses.

**How can hepatitis A be prevented?**

- Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet, changing a diaper or helping a child to use the toilet, before preparing food and beverages, and before eating
- Avoid drinking untreated water
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked shellfish (shellfish, such as clams and oysters, may be contaminated if they have been harvested from waters contaminated by sewage containing hepatitis A virus)
- Get vaccinated against hepatitis A
- Consult your health care provider if you have been exposed to hepatitis A
- Anyone with diarrhea should not prepare food for others

**Where can I get more information on hepatitis A?**

- Your health care provider
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov>
- California Department of Public Health  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/Hepatitis-A.aspx>

This information is intended for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation with a health care professional. Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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