



Hepatitis A

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease that results from infection with the Hepatitis A virus. Hepatitis A causes the liver to be inflamed or damaged and function can be affected. The liver is a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters the blood, and fights infection. Hepatitis A can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months.

How is Hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A virus is transmitted from person to person by putting something in the mouth that has been contaminated with the feces of a person with Hepatitis A. This type of transmission is called "fecal-oral." Hepatitis A can also be spread through sexual activities with an infected person and contaminated food or water.

How is Hepatitis A treated?

- Since there is no specific treatment for Hepatitis A, supportive measures such as rest, change of diet and increased fluid intake are generally recommended. It is important that a person with suspected Hepatitis A infection consult with their physician, who can confirm the diagnosis by obtaining a thorough patient history and performing certain lab tests.
- A physician can also recommend post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for close contacts to a Hepatitis A case. Either the Hepatitis A vaccine or the immune globulin within 2 weeks of exposure can prevent disease.

How can Hepatitis A be prevented?

- The best way to prevent Hepatitis A is by getting vaccinated. The vaccine is recommended for all children beginning at one year of age and all others who are at risk of infection. The Hepatitis A vaccine is safe and effective and given in a series of 2 shots, 6 months apart. Both doses are

needed for long term protection.

- Practice good personal hygiene by washing hands with soap and water prior to food preparation, before eating, after using the bathroom, or after diapering/toileting a small child.
- Infected food handlers, day care staff or attendees should be excluded from work or attendance until they are no longer infectious.

Who Should Get Vaccinated Against Hepatitis A?

- All children at age 1 year
- Travelers to countries where Hepatitis A is common
- Men who have sex with other men
- Users of recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- People with long term liver disease, including Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C

Symptoms of Hepatitis A:

The average time from exposure to symptoms is about 1 month. Most people are contagious for 2 weeks before and for a few days to 1 week after symptoms begin.

- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Joint pain
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Dark urine or Grey colored feces
- Jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin)

Note: Not everyone has symptoms. People can spread Hepatitis A even if they don't look or feel sick.

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