

HEPATITIS A FACTSHEET

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). HAV can be prevented with a vaccine.

WHAT IS HEPATITIS A?

Hepatitis A is a contagious acute liver disease that causes inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis A can be cleared by the immune system when the infection is mild, however severe infections may require medical treatment.

HOW DOES HEPATITIS A SPREAD?

Hepatitis A is passed in a person's feces (stool). The infection is **mainly spread by person-to-person contact** by putting something in the mouth (even though it may look clean) that has been contaminated with the stool of a person infected with HAV. Hepatitis A is also spread by **eating food or water contaminated with HAV**. Having **sexual contact and sharing syringes or drug equipment with a person infected with HAV** can cause infection as well.

SYMPTOMS

- **Yellow skin and eyes (jaundice)**
- **Brown, tea-colored urine**
- **Diarrhea or light-colored stool**
- **Fever**
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Stomach pain**
- **Nausea and/or vomiting**
- **Fatigue (tired)**

Symptoms usually appear within 28 days after exposure to HAV and can last up to 2 weeks or longer in severe cases. Some people are asymptomatic or do not experience any symptoms of HAV. All people who are infected with HAV can spread it to others. **If you have any symptoms, please contact your health care provider.**

The only way to know if you have HAV is to have a blood test. There is no special treatment for HAV, but doctors usually recommend rest, good diet, fluids, and avoiding alcohol. A few people may need to be hospitalized.

HEPATITIS A CAN BE PREVENTED WITH A VACCINE.



Vaccination is the best way to protect against hepatitis

A. The vaccine is routinely recommended for persons 12 months of age and older.

Other vaccine recommendations include:

- All children at age 1 year (i.e. 12-23 months)
- Travel to countries that have high rates of hepatitis A
- Men who have sex with men
- Users of injection and non-injection drugs
- Persons with chronic (lifelong) liver disease, such as hepatitis B & C
- People with clotting factor disorders, such as hemophilia
- Persons who work with HAV in a laboratory setting

WASH YOUR HANDS

Good personal hygiene is another prevention measure.

Wash hands with soap and water:



- After using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Before preparing any food or drink and before eating.