



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

HEPATITIS A

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a disease caused by a virus that infects the liver.

How is Hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A is found in the stool (poop) of people infected with Hepatitis A. It may be spread through the following ways:

- Putting anything in the mouth that has come in contact with the stool of someone infected with Hepatitis A
- Through contaminated food or water.
- Through anal sex.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Chills
- Fever
- Muscle aches and pains
- Extreme tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Stomach ache
- Yellow eyes or skin (jaundice)
- Some people may have no symptoms at all

Symptoms usually appear 15-50 days after exposure. The disease can last for as little as 1-2 weeks or, in more severe cases, up to several months.

How is Hepatitis A diagnosed?

By a specific blood test for Hepatitis A.

What is the treatment for Hepatitis A?

There is no specific treatment for Hepatitis A. Rest is important. People with Hepatitis A should avoid alcohol and other substances that can damage the liver.

How can Hepatitis A be prevented?

- Immune Globulin should be given to household and sexual contacts of infected persons to help prevent or decrease the severity of the disease. It must be given within 2 weeks of exposure.
- Careful hand washing is important, especially after going to the bathroom or changing a diaper, and before eating.
- Towels and bath items of people infected with hepatitis A should be kept separate from other family members.
- Clean and disinfect toilet daily.

Hepatitis A can be prevented by the Hepatitis A vaccine. This vaccine should be given to those who travel to countries with a high rate of Hepatitis A, those with Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, intravenous drug users, and those who engage in anal sex. It is also recommended for all children in certain age groups.

For more information on Hepatitis A:

Ottawa County Health Department

www.miOttawa.org

Medline Plus, the National Institutes of Health

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/00278.htm>