



Hepatitis A

May 2019



What is Hepatitis A?

- Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. The virus is one several types of hepatitis viruses that cause inflammation and affect your liver's ability to function.
- You're most likely to get hepatitis A from contaminated food or water or from close contact with a person or object that's infected. Mild cases of hepatitis A don't require treatment. Most people who are infected recover completely with no permanent liver damage.
- Practicing good hygiene, including washing hands frequently, is one of the best ways to protect against hepatitis A.

Symptoms

- Hepatitis A signs and symptoms typically don't appear until you've had the virus for a few weeks. But not everyone with hepatitis A develops them. If you do, hepatitis signs and symptoms can include:
 - Fatigue
 - Sudden nausea and vomiting
 - Abdominal pain
 - Clay-colored bowel movements
 - Loss of appetite
 - Low-grade fever

Symptoms

- Continued:
 - Dark urine
 - Joint pain
 - Yellowing of the skin and the whites of your eyes (jaundice)
 - Intense itching
- These symptoms may be relatively mild and go away in a few weeks. Sometimes, however, hepatitis A infections result in a severe illness that lasts several months.

When to SEE a Doctor

- Make an appointment with your doctor if you have signs or symptoms of hepatitis A.
- Getting a hepatitis A vaccine or an injection of immunoglobulin (an antibody) within two weeks of exposure to hepatitis A may protect you from infection. Ask your doctor about receiving the hepatitis A vaccine if:
 - You've traveled out of the country recently, particularly to Mexico or South or Central America, or to areas with poor sanitation.
 - A restaurant where you recently ate reports a hepatitis A outbreak.
 - Someone close to you, such as a roommate or caregiver, is diagnosed with hepatitis A.
 - You recently had sexual contact with someone with hepatitis A.

Causes

- Hepatitis A is caused by a virus that infects liver cells and causes inflammation. The inflammation can affect how your liver works and cause other organs signs and symptoms of hepatitis A.
- The virus most commonly spreads when you eat or drink something contaminated with fecal matter, even just tiny amounts. It does not spread through sneezing or coughing.
- Here are some specific ways hepatitis A virus can be spread:
 - Eating food handled by someone with the virus who doesn't thoroughly wash his or her hands after using the toilet.

Causes

- Continued:
 - Drinking contaminated water
 - Eating raw shellfish from water polluted with sewage
 - Being in close contact with a person who's infected- even if that person has no signs or symptoms
 - Having sex with someone who has the virus

Risk Factors

- Your at increased risk for hepatitis A if you:
 - Travel or work in areas of the world where hepatitis A is common
 - Attend child care or work in a child care center
 - Live with another person who has hepatitis A
 - Are a man who has sexual contact with other men
 - Have any type of sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis A
 - Are HIV positive
 - Are experiencing homelessness
 - Have a clotting-factor disorder, such as hemophilia
 - Use any type of illegal drugs (not just those that are injected)

Complications

- Unlike other types of viral hepatitis, hepatitis A does not cause long-term liver damage, and it doesn't become chronic.
- In rare cases, hepatitis A can cause a sudden loss of liver function, especially in older adults or people with chronic liver diseases. Acute liver failure requires a stay in the hospital for monitoring and treatment. Some people with acute liver failure may need a liver transplant.

Prevention

- The hepatitis A vaccine can prevent infection with the virus. The vaccine is typically given in two shots. The first one is followed by a booster shot six months later.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a hepatitis A vaccine for the following people:
 - All children at age 1, or older children who didn't receive the childhood vaccine
 - Anyone age 1 year or older who is experiencing homelessness
 - Infants ages 6 to 11 months traveling internationally
 - Family and caregivers of adoptees from countries where hepatitis A is common

Prevention

- Continued:
 - People in direct contact with others who have hepatitis A
 - Laboratory workers who may come in contact with hepatitis A
 - Men who have sex with men
 - People who work or travel in parts of the world where hepatitis A is common
 - People who use any illicit drugs, not just injectables
 - People with clotting-factor disorders
 - People with chronic liver disease, including hepatitis B and C
 - Anyone wishing to obtain protection

Follow Safety Precautions When Traveling

- If you're traveling to parts of the world where hepatitis A outbreaks occur, take these steps to prevent infection:
 - Peel and wash all fresh fruits and vegetables yourself
 - Don't eat raw or undercooked meat or fish
 - Drink bottled water and use it when brushing your teeth
 - Avoid all beverages with unknown purity, with or without ice
 - If bottled water isn't available, boil tap water before drinking it

What You Can Do and Reminders

- Always wash your hands before and after having contact with a patient.

***** Remember that all shifts must be clocked in and out, on EVV or Telephony, unless they are DODD. This is a state requirement and all staff must be in compliance by May 5, 2019