

# Fact Sheet: Hepatitis A

## What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease that results from infection with the Hepatitis A virus. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months. A vaccine is available to prevent this disease.

## Signs and Symptoms

The following symptoms may occur:

- Fever
- Stomach tenderness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Lack of appetite
- Yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes (Jaundice) and dark colored urine
- Clay-colored (gray) bowel movements

Some individuals do not show any symptoms. If symptoms occur, they usually appear anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks after exposure. Symptoms usually develop over a period of several days and typically last less than 2 months, although some people can be ill for as long as 6 months. Once you recover from Hepatitis A, you develop antibodies that protect you from the virus for life.

**If you are a food-service worker, a health-care worker, or a day-care worker: report your illness to your supervisor and do not work until your medical provider says it is ok.**

## Prevention

- You should always wash your hands after using the toilet, changing a diaper, and before eating or preparing food.
- Vaccines are also available for long-term protection against hepatitis A.
- A two dose series of Hepatitis A vaccine are recommended for all children 12-24 months.

## How is it spread?

The Hepatitis A virus is spread by the fecal-oral route or person-to-person contact. Fecal-oral means that you must get something (objects, food, or drinks) in your mouth that is contaminated with feces from an infected person. Person-to-person transmission results from contact with a household member or sex partner who has Hepatitis A. Infection may result from eating food or drink that is contaminated with the hepatitis A virus. **Hepatitis A is not spread by sneezes or coughs.**

## Treatment

Hepatitis A vaccine and Hepatitis A immune globulin should be given as soon as possible and no more than two weeks after exposure to be effective. If you think you have been exposed, call your doctor **immediately**.

### Infected people should:

- Get lots of rest and eat a well-balanced diet.
- Drink fluids (fruit juices and water) and avoid alcoholic beverages.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running water after using the toilet.

### Infected people should not:

- Share towels, washcloths, soap, or eating utensils.
- Make or handle food that will be eaten by others until at least 2 weeks after their jaundice appears or symptoms are gone.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care professional. For more information about communicable disease speak to your health care provider or call the Ingham County Health Department at (517)-887-4308.

Visit our website at <http://hd.ingham.org>

or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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