

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 skin and whites of eyes (Jaundice) and tea or cola-colored urine
- Tiredness

Some individuals do not show symptoms. If symptoms occur, they usually appear anywhere from 2 to 7 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. Hepatitis A does not become a chronic (long-term) infection. 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 2 dose series of Hepatitis A vaccines are recommended for **all** children 12 months old.

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/Home>

or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov

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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 (object, food, or drink) 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. Children may spread the virus to others without ever having symptoms. 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 2 weeks after exposure to be effective.
- If you think you have been exposed, call your doctor **immediately** to have a blood test administered.

Infected people should:

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

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