

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a disease that affects the liver. It is caused by the Hepatitis A virus. Anyone who has not had Hepatitis A in the past, can be affected by the virus. Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C are caused by different viruses. Infection with one type of Hepatitis does not give any protection against the other types of Hepatitis.

What Are The Symptoms Of Hepatitis A?

Early acute symptoms may include: lost of appetite, nausea, vomiting, achiness, abdominal pain, fatigue.

Later symptoms may include: dark colored urine, light or gray colored stools, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes).

When Do The Symptoms Start?

People will start becoming ill anywhere from 15-50 days after coming in contact with the virus.

The average length of time for becoming ill is approximately one month.



CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT FOR MORE INFORMATION

Boundary County office located in Bonners Ferry (208) 267-5558

Kootenai County office located in Hayden (208) 415-5100

Shoshone County office located in Kellogg (208) 786-7474

Benewah County office located in St. Maries (208) 245-4556

Bonner County office located in Sandpoint (208) 265-6384

Center for Disease Control (CDC)
Toll Free

Hepatitis Number 1-888-443-7232

Hepatitis A

Infectious Hepatitis Disease Recognition and Prevention



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Panhandle Health District
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

How is Hepatitis A Spread?

The virus is shed in the feces of the infected individual. The virus must then be ingested (eaten) to begin multiplying to a number which will make a person sick. A person who is infected with Hepatitis A is capable of infecting other people approximately two weeks before becoming ill and during the first two weeks of symptoms. Some people may not exhibit symptoms, but may still be capable of spreading the disease. This often happens with young children who are less likely to develop the symptoms and require assistance after toilet use. People spread the virus by not adequately cleaning their hands after using the bathroom or after coming into contact with feces of infected individuals. With very small particles of fecal matter still on their hands the person will contaminate items their hands come into contact with, such as food, water, ice, utensils, dishes and any other object a person may put in their mouth.

Hepatitis A is not usually spread by casual contact such as office or factory settings. It is however, readily spread in homes, daycares, institutional settings and food service establishments due to the nature of their services. Sexual contacts and illegal drug users also have an increased risk of contracting the disease.

Other Methods of Prevention

A vaccination for Hepatitis A is now available and shown to be very effective for long term prevention of the disease. However, this vaccine is not licensed for children under the age of two.

Immune globulin, a preparation of antibodies, is recommended for short-term protection against Hepatitis A and for persons who have already been exposed to the Hepatitis A virus. Immune globulin must be given within two weeks of contact with a case to be effective. As immune globulin is in short supply, the Hepatitis A vaccine is often preferred for travelers two years of age and older.

How Do I Avoid Getting Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is mostly a preventable disease. The key to prevention is insisting that everybody in your household has good hygienic practices.

Wash Hands Thoroughly!

- * After using the restroom
- * After changing diapers
- * After cleaning toilet facilities
- * Before preparing food
- * After handling raw shellfish, after any activity where the hands may have come into contact with human feces
- * Be sure to wash the hands of babies and children thoroughly before allowing them to eat.

What Do I Do If I Think I Have Hepatitis A?

Contact your physician. Hepatitis A may be diagnosed with a blood test. Immune globulin usually prevents Hepatitis A or causes symptoms to be milder, but must be given within two weeks of exposure to the Hepatitis A virus. One attack of Hepatitis A provides lifelong protection against the disease.

Can I Continue To Work If I Have The Disease?

Children with Hepatitis A must not attend daycare centers and kindergartens, for at least two weeks after symptoms have started.

Food handlers, healthcare workers, daycare employees, with Hepatitis A must not attend work until two weeks after symptoms or at least one week after jaundice. These employees are restricted from their duties by law. Contact your local health district for details.

How Do I Protect My Food Establishment Or Daycare?

Gloves and hand sanitizers must not take the place of washing your hands properly. Hand sanitizers are not as effective as thorough hands washing.

Bathrooms and toilets must be cleaned often to avoid the spread of viruses. Pay particular attention to surfaces such as toilet seats and handles, taps and diaper change tables.

Daycare

Hepatitis A spreads easily in childcare centers. For this reason it is important that centers follow thorough hand washing and cleaning procedures. The first sign of a Hepatitis A outbreak within a childcare center is likely to be an ill parent or employee, rather than a child.

Can I Destroy the Hepatitis A Virus?

The virus is killed by boiling at 185 degrees Fahrenheit for one minute. However, the disease can still be spread if food is contaminated after cooking.

Bleach solutions of 1 teaspoon of bleach per 1 quart tap water have been shown to inactivate the Hepatitis A virus. The bleach solution must remain in contact with the surface until it dries.

Use Proper Hand Washing Technique
Washing hands with soap and water for at least 20-seconds. Use plenty of soap, running water and continuous scrubbing motion. Clean under the fingernails with a clean brush. Use paper towels to dry the hands.

DO NOT

share cigarettes, illegal drugs, food, drinks or silverware with other people!