



## **Hepatitis A Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is hepatitis A?**

Hepatitis A is a virus that infects and can damage the liver. It is usually passed from one person to another through contaminated food or water. There is a vaccine to prevent Hepatitis A.

### **What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?**

Symptoms include jaundice (yellowing of eyes and skin), fatigue (feeling tired), abdominal pain, nausea and diarrhea. People typically develop symptoms about one month after they are exposed to the virus. Not everyone who is infected will have all of these symptoms.

Most people get better within a few weeks without any problems. Infants and young children tend to have very mild symptoms and are less likely to develop jaundice than are older children and adults.

People who have chronic liver disease or a weakened immune system could experience more severe illness.

### **How is the hepatitis A virus spread?**

The hepatitis A virus enters the body through the mouth and is passed in the stool (feces). The virus can be carried on an infected person's hands and can be spread by direct contact or by consuming food or drink that has been handled by the individual. Proper hand washing with soap can prevent transmission.

### **When could I first get sick and when could I spread the infection?**

Symptoms may appear anytime two to seven weeks after exposure, although usually they appear within three to four weeks. Infected people are most at risk to spread the virus in the two weeks before symptom onset and the week after symptom onset.

### **Is Hepatitis A fatal?**

While some people who have chronic liver disease or a weakened immune system could experience more severe illness and require hospitalization, hepatitis A is rarely fatal (fewer than 1 percent of cases).

### **Does past infection with hepatitis A make a person immune?**

Yes. Once a person recovers from hepatitis A, he or she is immune (protected) for life and no longer carries the virus.

### **Is there any treatment for hepatitis A?**

No. There is no treatment for hepatitis A other than supportive care. If you believe you may have hepatitis A, call your doctor. Most people recover fully on their own.

**How is hepatitis A diagnosed?**

If your doctor suspects hepatitis A, he or she can request a blood test.

**What is the treatment for Hepatitis A?**

There is no treatment for hepatitis A once symptoms appear. Generally, rest and not drinking alcohol is all that is needed.

**How can Hepatitis A be prevented?**

To prevent person-to-person spread, wash your hands carefully with soap and water after using the bathroom or changing diapers.

Avoid sexual practices that may result in hand or mouth exposure to stool. Free NYC Condoms are available in many locations to help keep you safe and healthy.

If you travel to a country where Hepatitis A is common, use bottled water or boil tap water for one minute before using. Avoid eating shellfish that may have come from a contaminated water source.

Ask your doctor about getting the Hepatitis A vaccine or call 311 to find a vaccine provider.