

HEPATITIS A FACT SHEET

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A disease is an infection of the liver. Hepatitis A disease is caused by a virus. This disease is serious because the virus affects the liver, a vital organ of the body.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A disease?

- Dark yellow/brown urine
- Yellowing of skin and white parts of eyes (called jaundice)
- Diarrhea or light-colored (grey) stool
- Fever, chills
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Upset stomach
- Stomach pain (especially near the liver)
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Joint/muscle pain

Symptoms of hepatitis A can start between 2 to 6 weeks after exposure. Hepatitis A may cause no symptoms in many young children and mild flu-like symptoms in older children and adults.

How is hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A virus is spread person to person. The virus is present in the stool of an infected person. Hepatitis A is typically spread when objects, food or drinks are contaminated with stool from an infected person. Hepatitis A can be spread easily in restaurant or in home and daycare settings by eating food contaminated with hepatitis A or changing diapers of hepatitis A infected individuals. People can also get hepatitis A from eating raw or undercooked clams, oysters and muscles from waters contaminated with hepatitis A.

Who can get hepatitis A disease?

A history of hepatitis A results in immunity to the illness and protects from future hepatitis A illness. Persons who have never had Hepatitis A disease nor received a vaccine to protect from hepatitis A can get hepatitis A disease. If you are a close contact to a person with hepatitis A disease, you may benefit from hepatitis A vaccine to help protect you from getting ill.

What is the treatment for hepatitis A disease?

There is no medicine to treat hepatitis A disease. Illness can last from a few weeks to several months. Consult with your health care provider if you have symptoms for hepatitis A disease the provider may suggest medicines to help relieve your symptoms. Also, it is important to remember to get plenty of rest, eat healthy foods (low in fat and high in protein) and avoid alcohol and fatty foods because they are hard on the liver.

How is hepatitis A disease prevented?

- **Get vaccinated.** Hepatitis A vaccine is a series of 2 shots given 6 months apart that will protect you from getting the disease for the rest of your life. Ask your health care provider about this vaccine.
- Frequent hand washing is important. Wash your hands with warm water and soap before eating, before making meals, after using the toilet, and after handling diapers
- Do not swim in contaminated waters or posted as "no swimming" to avoid exposure
- If you have hepatitis A disease now: Do not make meals or serve food to others; do not handle plates, drinking glasses or silverware that other people use. Use your own

dishes, silverware, sheets and towels and wash them in hot, soapy water after use. hepatitis A disease is reported to the local public health department so you can expect a call from public health.

- If you are exposed to hepatitis A disease: ask your doctor about getting an “IG” (immune globulin) shot or hepatitis A vaccine within two weeks after being exposed.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/hepatitis-a/>

Additional information may be found at the following links:

<http://cchealth.org/hepatitis-a/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/A/aFAQ.htm#overview>