

# HEPATITIS A

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



### What is hepatitis A?

- Hepatitis A is an inflammation of the liver caused by infection with the hepatitis A virus (HAV).
- Unlike Hepatitis B and C viruses, HAV does not cause a long-term disease. Infected persons develop immunity and cannot get the disease again.
- Hepatitis A occurs worldwide, but it is more common in developing countries.

### What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Not all people infected with hepatitis A will experience illness. Adults are more likely to have symptoms than young children. If symptoms develop, they can range from moderate to severe and may include:

- fever
- loss of appetite
- tiredness
- muscle aches
- nausea
- occasional diarrhea
- upper right abdominal pain
- dark urine (like cola or strong tea)
- light colored stools
- jaundice (a yellow color to the skin or whites of the eyes)

For most people the symptoms will gradually go away over a period of several weeks.

### How is hepatitis A spread?

- The hepatitis virus is found in the stools (feces) of people infected with hepatitis A.
- It is spread when a person puts something in his or her mouth that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person. Infected persons who do not have symptoms can still spread the virus.
- Contamination can be avoided through good hygiene by both infected and non-infected persons (careful handwashing after using the bathroom, before preparing or eating food, after changing diapers).

### How is hepatitis A diagnosed?

- Persons with hepatitis A symptoms should see their doctor.
- Blood will be drawn to check for HAV antibody (and possibly for type B and C antibody as well, since the symptoms can be similar).
- Your doctor may also order a blood test to check how well the liver is functioning.

### How is hepatitis A treated?

- There are no medicines to cure infection with hepatitis A.
- Your doctor may prescribe medicines to control nausea and vomiting, or IV fluids for dehydration.
- Most doctors will advise rest, fluids, and avoiding things that can harm the liver such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) and alcohol. People whose symptoms are well controlled can be cared for at home.

### How can hepatitis A be prevented?

- A safe and highly effective vaccine is available against Hepatitis A for people age 1 year and older.
- People who have not had the disease or been vaccinated and who are exposed to HAV can be given the vaccine as protection. Exposed persons who are not able to receive vaccine may be given Immune Globulin (IG), which can give short-term protection.
- For persons exposed to HAV, vaccine or IG should be given as soon as possible, but no later than two weeks after the exposure, to be effective at preventing hepatitis A.
- Using good hygiene practices and taking precautions (such as not eating raw or undercooked seafood or shellfish, not drinking untreated water or beverages with ice when traveling to developing countries, etc) can also help prevent infection with HAV.

More information on hepatitis A: [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/A/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/A/index.htm)

Updated 12/26/2018