

HEPATITIS A

Information for First Responders

Hepatitis A is a contagious, vaccine-preventable, liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. Mild cases can last a few weeks while severe cases can last several months and can cause death.

How is hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A spreads by putting something in your mouth (body part, object, food, or drink) that has been in contact with the feces (poop) of an infected person. Hepatitis A can be spread:

- When an individual does not wash their hands after contact with infected stool (e.g., after using the bathroom or changing diapers)
- By having sexual contact with an infected partner
- By consuming food or drinks that are contaminated by the virus
- By sharing drugs or drug “works” with an infected person

How can you protect yourself?

- **Get a hepatitis A vaccination.** For more information on the vaccine visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/hep-a.html
- **Wash your hands** after having contact with another individual, after using the bathroom, and before touching or consuming food and beverage.
- **Wear gloves** according to standard contact procedures.
- **Take precautions** whenever there is a chance of being exposed to bodily fluids or human waste. This includes wearing gloves, using a bleach solution (nine parts cool water to 1 part unscented bleach) to clean surfaces that came in contact with bodily fluids or human waste and securely disposing of soiled cleaning materials.

Who is at risk of getting hepatitis A?

Anyone can get hepatitis A, however, these groups are at the highest risk:

- People who are experiencing homelessness
- People who use injection and non-injection street drugs
- Men who have sexual contact with men
- People who live with or have sex with someone who has hepatitis A
- People with chronic liver diseases, such as cirrhosis, hepatitis B or hepatitis C
- People who are traveling to countries that have higher rates of hepatitis A
- Family members or caregivers of a recent adoptee from countries where hepatitis A is common

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Not all people infected with hepatitis A will experience illness. 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)

How is hepatitis A treated?

People experiencing the symptoms associated with hepatitis A should see their medical provider. Most people who get hepatitis A recover completely and don't have lasting liver damage. Treatment includes rest, fluids, and good nutrition. Severe cases may need to be hospitalized.