



What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. Hepatitis A can affect anyone.

Signs and symptoms

The disease varies in severity from a mild illness lasting 1 to 2 weeks to a more severe form lasting several months. Signs and symptoms may include jaundice, fatigue, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhea, and fever. There is no chronic (long-term) infection. Once you have had hepatitis A, you cannot get it again.

How is it spread?

The virus is found mainly in bowel movements and is spread through personal contact or by eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water.

Who are most at risk?

Household contacts of infected persons, sex contacts of infected persons, travelers to countries where Hepatitis A is common, men who have sex with men, and drug users are the most at risk for hepatitis A.

People who have never contracted hepatitis A and who are not vaccinated against hepatitis A are also at risk of infection. **Active duty members have been vaccinated against hepatitis A. Non military spouses may be at risk for hepatitis A if they have not been vaccinated. As of 2005, hepatitis A vaccine has been routinely recommended for all children from 12 through 23 months of age.** Contact your medical provider for further questions about the hepatitis A vaccination.

Prevention

Hepatitis A vaccine is the best protection. Additional preventive measures include washing your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before preparing and eating food.

What should you do if you think you have been exposed?

Hepatitis A is a viral disease, and as such, antibiotics are of no value in the treatment of the infection. If you have reason to believe you have been exposed to hepatitis A, talk to your medical provider.

For questions regarding this or other community health related issues, please contact:

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