

Hepatitis A

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus. People who become sick with Hepatitis A usually have fever, loss of appetite, nausea and generally feel unwell. A few days later, their skin and the whites of their eyes become a yellow color – a condition called jaundice. Occasionally, people will have no symptoms at all.

How is Hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A is spread from person to person by the fecal-oral route. The virus is excreted in the feces of the infected person, especially the week or two before the symptoms start, and while the person has jaundice.

Hepatitis A infection can happen by eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated by the feces of people infected with Hepatitis A virus. This contamination happens more often in countries where Hepatitis A occurs more frequently. It also happens from eating improperly cooked shellfish, and when there is an oral-fecal contact of infected individual feces.

People with Hepatitis A can spread the virus to others if they do not wash their hands after having a bowel movement, after changing the diapers of an infected person, or before preparing food for others.

How long does it take for symptoms to develop?

It can take between 15 to 50 days from exposure to the virus for symptoms of Hepatitis A to develop. The average time from exposure to symptoms is 25 to 30 days.

What is the treatment for Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a viral infection; there is no medication to treat it. Infected people should stay home and rest until they feel better. Alcohol should be avoided for several months to give the liver the best chance to recover completely.

What should I do if I have been exposed to a person with Hepatitis A?

When a person one year of age or older has been in contact with the Hepatitis A virus, infection may be prevented by giving a dose of Hepatitis A vaccine as soon as possible after exposure. A second dose should be given 6 to 12 months later to ensure long-term protection against Hepatitis A virus. In those individuals who cannot receive the vaccine, immunoglobulin may be considered.

How can Hepatitis A be prevented?

Good hand washing after using the bathroom is the best way to prevent spreading Hepatitis A. Immunization is another option.

People with Hepatitis A should avoid preparing food for others.

Who can tell me more about Hepatitis A?

Talk to your doctor or contact your local health centre for more information.

Contact Information

For more information contact Yukon Communicable Disease Control at 667-8323. #4 Hospital Road, Whitehorse, Yukon

In the communities call toll-free 1-800-661-0408 extension 8323.

Adapted from Ontario Health & Wellness