

HEPATITIS A

Reportable to local or state health department

Consult the health department before posting/distributing Parent/Guardian fact sheet.

Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver. It is the most common form of hepatitis infection in the United States. Among reported cases, the most frequent source of infection is household or sexual contact with a person who has hepatitis A, followed by attending or working in childcare settings, recent international travel, or connection with suspected food or waterborne outbreaks.

CAUSE	Hepatitis A virus.
SYMPTOMS	Usually starts suddenly with fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, and nausea. Dark (tea or cola-colored) urine, light-colored stools, and jaundice (yellowing of eyes or skin) may appear a few days later. Most children younger than 6 years of age, (70%) do not show symptoms. Older children and adults with hepatitis A usually have symptoms, often including jaundice.
SPREAD	<p>Hepatitis A viruses leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. Spread can occur either by person-to-person contact or when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers and later prepare/handle food.</p> <p>Children may pass the virus to household members or childcare staff without ever having symptoms.</p>
INCUBATION	It takes from 15 to 50 days, usually about 28 days, from the time a person is exposed to the virus until symptoms begin.
CONTAGIOUS PERIOD	From 2 weeks before to 2 weeks after symptoms begin. Minimal risk one week after the onset of jaundice.
EXCLUSION	<u>Childcare</u> and <u>School</u> : Consult with your local or state health department. Each situation must be looked at individually to decide if the person with hepatitis A can spread the virus to others.
DIAGNOSIS	A blood test (Hepatitis A IgM antibody test) is done to determine whether there is recent or current infection.
TREATMENT	No specific medication is given to the person with hepatitis A.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for all children 12-23 months of age and should be considered for groups at increased risk for hepatitis. Those persons include international travelers, men who have sex with men, illicit drug users, and persons with occupational risk. Vaccine should also be considered for those with chronic liver disease because they are at increased risk for severe problems.

HEPATITIS A

PREVENTION/CONTROL (CONTINUED)

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet and changing diapers and before preparing or eating food. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.** Staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after children have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys when soiled and at least daily. (See pgs 34-36.)
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled. (See pgs 34-36.)
- If there is a case of hepatitis A in a childcare or school, consult with the local or state health department. They will determine who has been exposed and make recommendations.

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.