



# Hepatitis A

## **What is hepatitis A?**

Hepatitis A is a self-limited liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus.

## **How do you get hepatitis A?**

- Putting something in your mouth that has been infected (food or water) with the feces of a person with hepatitis A infection.
- Some sexual activities may expose you to hepatitis A, specifically direct or indirect anal-oral sex with a person who has hepatitis A infection.

Hepatitis A is NOT spread by: casual contact, infected mothers during birth, urine or respiratory secretions and rarely by blood.

## **How can you tell if you have hepatitis A?**

While small children have mild or no symptoms, older children and adults usually have symptoms.

Symptoms can include one or more of the following: fever, feeling tired, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, clay-coloured bowel movements, joint pain or jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes).

Symptoms can appear as early as 15 days or as long as 50 days after exposure.

The illness usually lasts less than two months (range is one week to nine months) and some people may have a relapsing illness.

Death is rare.

## **How do you get tested for hepatitis A?**

A specific blood test is done.

## **How is hepatitis A treated?**

- There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A. Most people recover completely with life-long immunity that will protect you from getting hepatitis A again.

- People with hepatitis A should stay at home and rest until they feel better. Alcoholic beverages should not be consumed during early infection.
- Household members and sexual contacts should be vaccinated against hepatitis A.
- See your health care provider for further information.

## **How do you protect yourself and others?**

- It is important to have good personal hygiene, including frequent and proper hand washing after using toilet (and diapering children) and before handling food. The virus may be present in feces for several months after the start of symptoms, even if an infected person is feeling better.
- Take precautions when travelling in countries where hygiene and sanitation may be inadequate.
  - a) Make sure fresh fruits and vegetables have been washed with clean water or peel them yourself.
  - b) When eating cooked foods, make sure they are still hot when they are served.

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## **Who can you talk to if you have more questions?**

If you have concerns or questions call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit our youth website at [www.thephakz.org](http://www.thephakz.org), or the health unit website below.



Tel: 721-7520  
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520  
[www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)

*Your Health Connection*

- c) Avoid beverages or ice that may have been prepared with untreated water.
- d) Wash hands before eating or drinking.
- Use condoms for any type of oral, anal and vaginal sex.
- Do not share sex toys.

Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended to prevent infection. It is a two dose series.

Hepatitis A vaccine may be part of a three dose combined vaccine which includes hepatitis B vaccine—this is called Twinrix.

***If you have hepatitis A***

Follow the above suggestions that will help prevent others from being infected, and:

- avoid preparing food for others
- ensure your household contacts are vaccinated against hepatitis A.

***Hepatitis A vaccine is available free of charge from the health unit or your health care provider for:***

- men who have sex with men
- people who use illegal drugs (injection and non-injection)
- people who have a chronic liver disease such as hepatitis B and/or C
- household or sexual contacts of a person with hepatitis A.