

HEPATITIS A

Hepatitis A is a liver disease which is spread by contaminated food and water. It can also be spread from the hands of a person with Hepatitis and rarely spread through sexual contact.

KEY FACTS

Hepatitis A:

- is a viral liver disease that can cause mild to severe illness;
- virus (HAV) is transmitted through ingestion of contaminated food and water or through direct contact with an infectious person.
- Almost everyone recovers fully from Hepatitis A with a lifelong immunity. However, a very small proportion of people infected with Hepatitis A could die from severe Hepatitis A.
- The infection is associated with a lack of safe water, and poor sanitation and personal hygiene (such as dirty hands) and oral-anal sex.
- A safe and effective vaccine is available to prevent Hepatitis A.

HEALTH RISKS

Hepatitis A is a common infection among people travelling to countries with poor sanitation and lack of safe water supply. Unlike Hepatitis B and C, Hepatitis A does not cause chronic liver disease and is rarely fatal, but it can cause debilitating symptoms and fulminant hepatitis (acute liver failure), which is often fatal.



SYMPTOMS

- Symptoms of Hepatitis A range from mild to severe, and can include fever, malaise, loss of appetite.
- Some patients can have diarrhoea, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark-coloured urine and jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes).
- Not everyone who is infected will have all the symptoms.
- Adults have signs and symptoms of illness more often than children. The severity of disease and fatal outcomes are higher in older age groups. Infected children under 6 years of age do not usually experience noticeable symptoms.
- Hepatitis A sometimes relapses. The person who just recovered falls sick again with another acute episode. This is, however, followed by recovery.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for Hepatitis A. Recovery from symptoms following infection may be slow and may take several weeks or months.

- Most important is the avoidance of unnecessary medications. Acetaminophen / Paracetamol and medication against vomiting should not be given.
- Therapy is aimed at maintaining comfort and adequate nutritional balance, including replacement of fluids that are lost from vomiting and diarrhoea.

PREVENTION

- Improved sanitation, food safety and immunization are the most effective ways to combat Hepatitis A.
- Adequate supplies of safe drinking water and proper disposal of sewage within communities can reduce the spread of Hepatitis A. If you are currently abroad, if possible, only drink bottled water from a bottle that was properly sealed.

- Personal hygiene practices such as regular hand washing before meals and after going to the bathroom.
- Several injectable inactivated Hepatitis A vaccines, which are nearly 100% effective, are available internationally. All are similar in terms of how well they protect people from the virus and their side effects. No vaccine is licensed for children younger than 1 year of age.

As medical advancement is always happening the ITF will periodically update this information, as necessary. You can also keep yourself updated on Hepatitis A infection from WHO website at:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hepatitis-a>



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