

Parent Food Safety Guide for Hepatitis A



What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is the only common vaccine-preventable foodborne disease in the United States. It is one of five human hepatitis viruses that primarily infect the human liver and cause human illness. Unlike hepatitis B and C, hepatitis A doesn't develop into chronic hepatitis or cirrhosis, but in rare cases infection with hepatitis A virus (HAV) can lead to a more rapid onset of liver failure and death.



How do you get Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a communicable (or contagious) disease that is transmitted by the "fecal – oral route," either through person-to-person contact or contaminated food or water. Food-related outbreaks are usually traced to food that has been contaminated by an HAV-infected food handler. Fresh produce contaminated during cultivation, harvesting, processing, and distribution has also been a source of hepatitis A.



What to look for:

Symptoms typically begin about 28 days after infection with HAV, but can begin as early as 15 days or as late as 50 days after exposure. Symptoms may include headache, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal discomfort, fatigue, joint pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, and fever. Jaundice, a yellowish discoloration of the skin and whites of the eyes, occurs in most cases. Hepatitis A may cause no symptoms at all when it is contracted, especially in children. Those infected usually recover fully within 2 to 6 months.



What to do:

Infection is determined by a blood test. If you know you have been exposed to Hepatitis A, immune globulin shots can reduce your chance of infection by up to 90%.



Prevention:

Ask your health care provider about vaccination – there are many reasons to seriously consider it, including working with food or ill persons, travel, or an impaired immune system. Children who contract hepatitis A but have no symptoms can also pass the virus through ordinary play to their parents. Make sure your childcare providers are vaccinated, and be aware of friends and relatives who may have traveled to countries with high rates of HAV infection. Stay alert to notices of HAV outbreaks to determine if your family has been exposed. For more information visit www.about-hepatitis.com

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This brochure is part of our on-going effort to end the need for hepatitis litigation in this country. Until then, you can contact us at WWW.MARLERCLARK.COM or by calling 866-770-2032.

