

Fact Sheet

Disease:	Viral Hepatitis (A)
Overview:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hepatitis A is a viral liver disease that can cause mild to severe illness. • The hepatitis A 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 fulminant hepatitis. • The risk of hepatitis A infection is associated with a lack of safe water, and poor sanitation and hygiene (such as dirty hands). • A safe and effective vaccine is available to prevent hepatitis A.
Introduction	<p>It is a highly contagious virus that causes liver disease and inflammation, among other symptoms. Hepatitis A infection does not cause chronic liver disease</p>
Causes:	<p>Hepatitis A Transmission.</p>
Transmission	<p>Hepatitis A is transmitted in several ways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an infected person does not wash his or her hands properly after going to the bathroom and touches other objects or food. • Drinking contaminated water.

Fact Sheet

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consumption of contaminated raw shellfish (clams and oysters).• Direct contact with an infectious person, even with no overt symptoms.• Being a sexual partner of someone with acute hepatitis A infection.
Symptoms:	<p>Adults have signs and symptoms of illness more often than children, which range from mild to severe, and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes).• Abdominal discomfort and nausea, mainly on the upper right-hand-side near to the liver.• Dark urine.• Fatigue and vomiting.• Appetite loss.• Joint pain.• Fever. <p>Not everyone who is infected will have all of the symptoms.</p>
Diagnosis:	Lab Test.
Incubation Period	The incubation period of hepatitis A is usually 14–28 days. Not everyone who is infected will exhibit all of the symptoms.

Fact Sheet

Risk Factor:

- Poor sanitation.
- Lack of safe water.
- Use of recreational drugs.
- Living in a household with an infected person.
- Being a sexual partner of someone with acute hepatitis A infection.
- Traveling to areas of high endemicity without being immunized.

Higher Susceptibility Groups:

- Older age groups may lead to higher and fatal disease rates.
- Travelers to countries where the virus is endemic.
- People with chronic liver disease.

Complications:

Unlike other types of hepatitis, hepatitis A infection 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, requiring immediate liver transplant.

Prevention:

The spread of hepatitis A can be reduced by:

- Taking hepatitis A vaccine (no vaccine for children below 1 year.)
- Adopting personal hygiene practices such as: Frequent hand-washing with clean water.
- Adequate supplies of safe drinking water.
- Proper disposal of sewage within communities.

Fact Sheet

Treatment:

There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A. Therapy is aimed at maintaining comfort and adequate nutritional balance, including replacement of fluids that are lost from vomiting and diarrhea. Hospitalization is unnecessary in the absence of acute liver failure.

Recovery from symptoms following infection may be slow and may take several weeks or months. Most important is the avoidance of unnecessary medications (like: Acetaminophen / Paracetamol and medication against vomiting), Almost everyone recovers fully from hepatitis A with a lifelong immunity.

References:

- WHO

<http://www.who.int/en/>

- NHS

<http://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx>

Health Enhancement and Health Education General Department

For more information, please email us on:

Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa