

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

HEPATITIS A

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus that lasts for several weeks.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually appear suddenly 2 to 6 weeks after exposure to the virus and include:

- Nausea (upset stomach), vomiting, and abdominal cramps (stomach or side pain).
- Fever, tiredness
- Dark yellow or brown urine
- Pale or white-colored stool (poop)
- Yellow eyes or skin
- Young children may have only a mild flu-like illness without jaundice, or may have no symptoms.

Transmission

- The virus lives in the liver and leaves the body in the stool (poop). The virus enters another person when hands, food, or objects contaminated with stool are put in the mouth. Hepatitis A often spreads in daycares or households where people have close contact and share bathroom facilities.
- Hepatitis A can also be spread through sexual activity if hands or mouth come in contact with stool (poop) or parts of the body contaminated with stool.
- A person is most contagious during the 2 weeks before the illness symptoms begin.
- Hepatitis A is not spread by kissing, sneezing, or by saliva.

Treatment

- There is no specific treatment for Hepatitis A. Rest and plenty of fluids are recommended. Avoid drugs and alcohol, as these can further damage the liver.
- Most people recover within 3 weeks. Hepatitis A infection is more severe with age, and in rare circumstances, can cause severe complications and liver failure.
- Once a person has Hepatitis A, they cannot get it again.

Prevention

- Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food. Even children that seem healthy could carry germs so use caution at all times.
- Hepatitis A vaccine provides protection against hepatitis A for many years. The vaccination series consists of 2 doses that are given at least 6 months apart.
- Immune globulin (IG) is a shot that can be given to people who have not been vaccinated but were exposed to someone with Hepatitis A. It can prevent hepatitis A 80-90% of the time if given within 14 days of exposure to an infected individual. Protection from IG only lasts about 3 months.

Who should get hepatitis A vaccine?

- Gay and bisexual men.
- Drug users (injection and non-injection).
- International travelers where hepatitis A is common
- Persons with chronic liver disease, including chronic hepatitis B and hepatitis C.
- Persons with clotting factor disorders, such as hemophiliacs.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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