

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable illness that can be spread through food or drinks that have been contaminated with the virus. If you are a food handler, it's important to take steps to prevent the spread of hepatitis A.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious (spreads person-to-person) liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (germ). Mild cases can last a few weeks, while severe cases can last several months.

How does hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A is primarily spread by putting something in your mouth (object, food, or drink) that has been in contact with the feces (poop) of an infected person. Hepatitis A can be spread by:

- Not washing hands after contact with infected feces
- Consuming food or drinks that are contaminated by the virus
- Having sexual contact with an infected individual
- Contact with the blood of an infected person

Infected food handlers are at-risk for spreading hepatitis A to others if they work while infected with hepatitis A. Food handlers infected with hepatitis A are required by law to be excluded from work until cleared by the health department.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Not everyone shows symptoms. If symptoms develop, they usually appear 2-6 weeks after infection and can include:

- Fever
- Nausea
- Dark urine
- Yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice)
- Feeling tired
- Vomiting
- (pee)
- Grey stool
- Stomach pain
- Joint pain

Food handlers who develop symptoms should immediately stop working, report their illness to their manager, and see a doctor. By law, suspected hepatitis A cases must be reported to the health department.

How is hepatitis A treated?

Treatment includes rest, good nutrition, fluids, and medical monitoring. Most people need to be hospitalized while being treated for hepatitis A but recover completely and do not have lasting liver damage.

How can food handlers protect themselves from infection?

The best way to protect against hepatitis A infection is to get vaccinated. Once vaccinated, protection from hepatitis A is lifelong.

Public Health recommends that all food handlers working in venues that provide food and drinks get vaccinated. All food handlers should follow these prevention steps:

- Wear gloves when preparing food
- Don't come to work while sick, especially if you have diarrhea and/or vomiting
- Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water after using the restroom and before preparing or serving food.
- If you get sick while at work, let your manager know right away

Protect yourself from infection:



Vaccines are available at the health department, pharmacies and medical providers.



Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to prevent the spread of hepatitis A.

Six Steps for Proper Hand Washing:

1. Wet hands
2. Apply soap
3. Scrub
4. Rinse
5. Dry with a paper towel
6. Turn off water with the paper towel



Still have questions?

We are happy to answer them.

Dial 770.339.4260 and then ask for the Epidemiologist on call.

Call to schedule a vaccine appointment today.

770.904.3717

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