



Hepatitis A

What is it?

Hepatitis A is a very contagious virus that causes a liver infection.

What does it look like?

Hepatitis A disease differs from person to person. Many people, especially children who become infected, have very mild symptoms or none at all. People who do get sick, usually have symptoms of fever, loss of appetite, nausea, fatigue, and generally an un-well feeling. After a few days, yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes may occur, a condition called jaundice. A person can get sick anywhere from 15 to 50 days (usually 28 to 30 days) after coming in contact with the hepatitis A virus. Symptoms usually last about four weeks.

How is it spread?

Hepatitis A virus is present in the feces of infected people. It can be spread by contaminated water, food that has been handled by an infected person, raw or uncooked shellfish from contaminated waters, or produce washed with contaminated water. Hepatitis A can also be spread by close personal household contact with an infected person.

A person with hepatitis A is infectious up to two weeks before symptoms start, and up to one week after jaundice appears.

Hepatitis A is common in countries where poor sanitation and poor personal hygiene exist. Hepatitis A vaccine prior to travel to these areas is recommended. Hepatitis A vaccine is purchased at a pharmacy with a prescription or at a travel clinic.

Ways to reduce the spread of hepatitis A

Proper hand washing after using the washroom or changing diapers, before eating or preparing food, and thorough cooking of shellfish are ways to reduce the spread of hepatitis A. Persons with hepatitis A should not prepare food for others.

Hepatitis A vaccine is offered at no cost to persons who ate food prepared by an infected person, close personal household contacts of an infected person, daycare workers or attendees who are contacts, intravenous drug users, men



who have sex with men and persons with chronic liver disease including hepatitis B and hepatitis C carriers.

Recommended absence

Persons with hepatitis A infection should be excluded from work, school or daycare for one week after the onset of illness.

Hepatitis A must be reported to the Medical Officer of Health as per the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

For more information, please contact a member of Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit's Infectious Disease Team.



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