



HEPATITIS A FACT SHEET

WHAT IS HEPATITIS A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months.

HOW DO YOU GET HEPATITIS A?

Hepatitis A is usually spread when a person ingests fecal matter—even in microscopic amounts—from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by feces or stool from an infected person. This can happen when:

- An infected person does not wash his/her hands after going to the bathroom and then touches objects or food
- Not properly washing hands after changing diapers or cleaning up stool from an infected person
- Someone engages in sexual activities with an infected person.

SYMPTOMS

Some people get Hepatitis A and have no symptoms. If symptoms occur, they usually appear anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks after exposure. Adults are more likely to have symptoms than children. Symptoms may include

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Clay-colored bowel movements
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (a yellowing of the skin or eyes)

TREATMENT

There are no special treatments for Hepatitis A. Most people with Hepatitis A will feel sick for a few months before they begin to feel better. During this time, doctors usually recommend rest, adequate nutrition, and fluids. Discuss treatment options with your doctors.

PREVENTION

The best way to prevent Hepatitis A is through vaccination with the Hepatitis A vaccine. Vaccination is recommended for all children, for travelers to certain countries, and for people at high risk for infection with the virus.

Wash your hands with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, or before preparing food.

DGHD EFFORTS

Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the Delaware General Health District (DGHD). The DGHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education.