

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus, which is very infectious. Symptoms can include fever, tiredness, stomach pain, loss of appetite and nausea. This is sometimes followed by dark urine and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice). Symptoms can last from 1 week to several months. Children under 3 years old rarely have any symptoms. Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for people at higher risk of being infected.

How it spreads

Hepatitis A spreads when the virus enters the body by the mouth. This can happen when:

- people eat contaminated food or drink contaminated water
- infected people do not wash their hands well after using the toilet and their hands contaminate food or surfaces
- a person changes the nappy of an infected child and does not wash their hands well.

The virus can survive on unwashed hands or room-temperature food for several hours. Heating or freezing contaminated food does not always kill the virus.

Exclusion period

Exclude until at least 7 days after jaundice starts, or if there is no jaundice, until 2 weeks after onset of other symptoms.

Actions for educators and other staff

Contact your local public health unit for advice if you have a case of hepatitis A in your service.

Follow the exclusion period in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Ensure staff and children have good hand and toileting hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Encourage staff to be vaccinated against hepatitis A.

Actions for parents and carers

Take your child to a doctor to discuss caring for them and vaccination options for family members.

Make sure you and your child wash their hands regularly, especially after going to the toilet or changing nappies.

Keep the child at home for the exclusion period, or longer, until they are feeling better. You will need a medical certificate of recovery from a doctor before your child can return to the service.

More information about hepatitis A

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis A (healthdirect.gov.au/hepatitis-a).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.