

Hepatitis A: What you need to know to keep your child safe

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). The virus is very easily spread through person-to-person contact, or by eating or drinking food or water with the hepatitis A virus in it. The infection is short-term. Once you have had hepatitis A, you cannot get sick from it again.

Signs and symptoms

Some people with hepatitis A do not have any symptoms. Infants and young children tend to have very mild or no symptoms.

Common signs and symptoms of hepatitis A:

- Fever
- Feeling tired or dizzy
- Not feeling hungry
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Feeling stomach pain
- Having dark-colored urine (pee)
- Having grey-colored poop
- Feeling joint pain
- Yellowing of the skin and white part of the eyes (jaundice)

People can spread the disease for 2 weeks before symptoms show up.

Symptoms usually start about 4 weeks after the hepatitis A virus enters your body.

Hepatitis A can develop over several days, and usually lasts less than 2 months, but may last as long as 6 months.

Prevention

Vaccines are the best way to prevent hepatitis A. The hepatitis A vaccine is safe and effective.

All children should get the hepatitis A vaccine when they reach 12 months. To be fully protected, your child needs to get all of the shots in the series (usually given in 2 shots, 6 months apart).

People should be vaccinated against hepatitis A before travelling to countries where hepatitis A is common.

Hand washing and good hygiene practices are also important in reducing the spread of hepatitis A.

It is important to always wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom, before preparing food, and before eating.

These instructions are only general guidelines. Your health care provider may give you special instructions. If you have questions or concerns, please call your health care provider.