

Hepatitis A

What is Hepatitis A? How common is it?

Hepatitis A is caused by a virus typically caught by close contact with an infected person or by ingesting contaminated food or water. Over 25,000 cases per year are reported in the United States per the CDC.

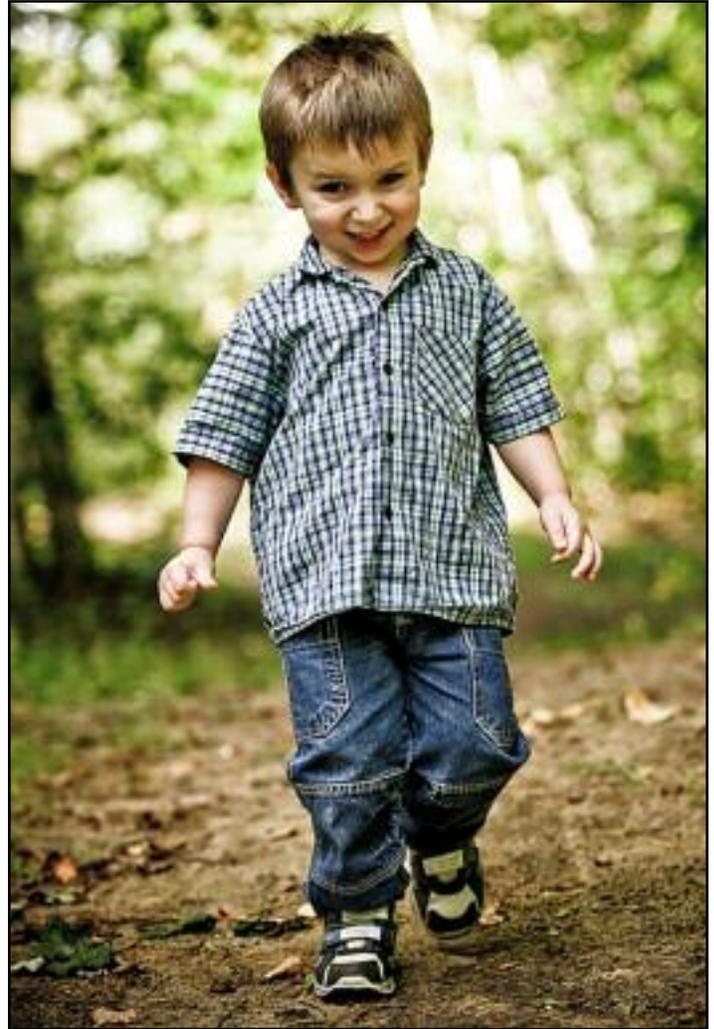
What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can occur 15 to 50 days after someone is exposed to the virus. Younger children frequently have only mild flu-like symptoms, while older children and adults usually become sicker. Common symptoms include nausea, fatigue, stomach pains, diarrhea, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Standard blood tests often reveal liver inflammation and a more specialized blood test can confirm hepatitis A infection.

What are the complications?

Most people completely recover from hepatitis A within 4 to 6 weeks without any long-term complications. In a minority, however, the infection can be very severe and result in major damage to the liver.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS :



Hepatitis A vaccination

The vaccine preparations available in the United States consist of inactivated virus and are very effective. A series of 2 injections is necessary to ensure one develops protection against the virus. A booster may be needed to keep adequate protection. Allergic reactions to the vaccine are rare, but, if present, are a reason not to continue receiving the injections.

Who should get vaccinated?

This vaccine is recommended for ALL children at 1 year of age. It is also recommended for anyone else who has a vaccination program available to them OR are at increased risk of contracting Hepatitis A. This includes individuals with any Chronic Liver Problem or traveling to an area where hepatitis A is common.

Hepatitis A continued

What are the side effects from the vaccine?

- ◆ Soreness at the site of injection
- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Loss of appetite
- ◆ Tiredness
- ◆ Serious allergic reaction

Most people have no reactions, except mild soreness at the site of the injection. Rarely, more severe allergic reactions can occur, requiring that the vaccination be discontinued.

What if I am exposed to the virus?

Hepatitis A is a self-limited disease in the majority of patients and no intervention is necessary. In immunocompromised individuals, an injection with antibodies to hepatitis A (immune globulin) may be given. If exposure is unclear, then the vaccine can be given to prevent future infections.

For more information or to locate a pediatric gastroenterologist in your area please visit our website at: www.naspgghan.org

IMPORTANT REMINDER: *This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.*

LINKS:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hepa/default.htm>

http://www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pub/hepa_ez/index.htm

<http://www.healthychildren.org/english/health-issues/vaccine-preventable-diseases/Pages/Hepatitis-A.aspx>

