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HEPATITIS A

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is an inflammation of the liver caused by the Hepatitis A Virus (HAV). The virus enters the body by ingestion. The bowel movement of a person with Hepatitis A is highly infectious. It is spread from person to person through poor handwashing, through sexual contact, and by eating/drinking contaminated food and water. The disease can vary from a mild illness lasting 1-2 weeks to a disabling disease lasting several months. Complications from Hepatitis A are rare, and recovery is often complete.

What are the signs and symptoms of Hepatitis A?

- Nausea
- Abdominal Pain
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Yellow Skin
- Yellow Eyes
- Lack of Appetite
- Dark Urine
- Fatigue/Tiredness
- Sore Muscles
- Headache

Symptoms of Hepatitis A usually occur 2-6 weeks after exposure, averaging at 28-30 days. A person with Hepatitis A is very infectious 7-10 days before symptoms develop and is usually not infectious 7 days after the onset of jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Some individuals, especially children, do not develop symptoms. Sometimes symptoms can last up to six months. Even if there are no symptoms, individuals are still infectious and can spread the disease.

SEE A PHYSICIAN FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT

How can I prevent Hepatitis A?

- Obtain vaccination to prevent Hepatitis A
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly
- Wash hands after bathroom use
- Do not handle food if ill
- Cook shellfish thoroughly
- Maintain adequate refrigeration of foods
- Wash hands after diaper changing
- Wash hands before and after handling food
- Do not share eating utensils without thoroughly washing them after each

Who should get Hepatitis A vaccine?

If you fall into any of the following groups, you should consult with your doctor or public health department about getting vaccinated against Hepatitis A:

- People who travel to or work in countries outside of the continental U.S
- Children 1 – 18 years of age should receive the Hepatitis A vaccine
- Men who have sex with men
- Street drug users
- People with chronic liver disease
- Hemophiliacs
- People working with Hepatitis A virus in an experimental lab setting
- People who have Hepatitis B or Hepatitis