

# Hepatitis A

**Objective:** To increase awareness of the health risks and prevention methods associated with Hepatitis A

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Hepatitis A is a contagious, inflammatory liver disease caused by infection with the Hepatitis A virus. Rates of infection have decreased by 95% since a vaccine was introduced in 1995, but there are still around 2,500 cases a year in the United States.

## Symptoms

Hepatitis A is not a chronic infection. Many people with Hepatitis A have no symptoms, especially young children. If symptoms do appear, it will happen between 2 and 6 weeks after exposure, and they usually last 1 – 2 weeks but may last up to several months in more severe cases. Nearly every infected person recovers completely from the infection and has no lasting liver damage. After recovery, they are immune to Hepatitis A for the rest of their lives.

Hepatitis A is rarely fatal but it can cause debilitating symptoms and acute liver failure, which is often fatal especially for individuals who are 50 or older and have other liver diseases, such as Hepatitis B or C.

### Symptoms may include the following:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dark-colored urine and jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes)
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain

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## Transmission

Hepatitis A virus can persist in the environment for months outside of the body.

- Hepatitis A is spread via the fecal-oral route, which involves either touching surfaces or ingesting something contaminated by the feces of an infected person.
- It is most commonly spread by close contact with an infected member of the household or by sex with an infected partner.
- Public outbreaks of Hepatitis A often involve fruits, vegetables, shellfish, ice, or water. However, hepatitis A only accounts for .001% of hospitalizations due to foodborne illness.

## Treatment and Prevention

### Treatment:

There are no specific treatments for people who develop Hepatitis A infection other than rest, good nutrition, adequate fluids, and avoidance of alcohol.

### Prevention:

Either getting the Hepatitis A vaccination or having a prior infection of Hepatitis A will prevent you from developing the disease. Other integral prevention methods include:

- Frequent handwashing with soap and water after using the bathroom or changing diapers.
- Washing hands well prior to preparing food, especially for food handlers.
- Proper sanitization of food-contact surfaces using a 1:10 dilution of bleach. (The virus resists many other common disinfectants.)
- Cooking food or boiling water at temperatures high enough to kill the virus (185 degrees for at least one minute). Freezing temperatures have no effect on the virus.
- Washing food, especially fruits, vegetables, and shellfish.

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## **Vaccination is recommended for the following high-risk groups:**

- All children in the US at 1 year of age
- Children aged 2 – 18 who live in areas with high infection rates
- People travelling or working in countries with high rates of hepatitis A
- Men who have sex with other men
- Users of illegal drugs
- People whose occupation involves laboratory exposure to the virus
- People with chronic liver disease or clotting-factor disorders
- Family members of children adopted from countries with high rates of hepatitis A

SAMPLE

# Hepatitis A

This form documents that the training specified above was presented to the listed participants. By signing below, each participant acknowledges receiving this training.

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_ Trainer's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Class Participants:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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