


# HEPATITIS A

## (Infectious Hepatitis)




Hepatitis A is a liver infection that is caused by the hepatitis A virus. Anyone can get the hepatitis A virus, but children and people who live in or travel to countries where hepatitis A is common are more likely to get it. Approximately 10-30 cases of hepatitis A occur per year in Wisconsin. Once you have hepatitis A, you cannot get sick from it again.

### What causes it?

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- ▶ Hepatitis A is usually spread when the virus is taken in by mouth from contact with objects, food, or drinks accidentally contaminated by feces (stool) of an infected person.
  - ▶ Common ways people can become sick are through person-to-person contact (e.g., when someone uses the bathroom and does not wash their hands properly and then touches objects or food, or when someone has sexual contact with an infected person) or through contaminated food or water.


### What are the 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. People can spread the disease for two weeks before symptoms appear. If symptoms do occur, they can show up anywhere from two to seven weeks after being exposed. These symptoms can develop over several days:


- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Poor appetite
- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Dark colored urine
- ▶ Nausea
- ▶ Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes)

### What are the treatment options?



There are no medicines that specifically treat hepatitis A. Eating well, getting enough rest, and drinking fluids are usually what is needed to recover. Some people may need to be hospitalized, but people rarely die from hepatitis A.

### How can it be prevented?

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- ▶ The single most effective way to prevent the spread of the hepatitis A virus is to get the hepatitis A vaccine. The vaccine is recommended for all children one year of age or older and other groups of people who are at high risk for getting hepatitis A. People who are traveling to countries with high rates of hepatitis A or those with chronic liver disease should talk with their doctor about getting vaccinated.
  - ▶ It is always important to wash your hands after using the toilet, after changing diapers, and before touching any food.
  - ▶ People who have been exposed to hepatitis A should get one dose of the vaccine or immune globulin as soon as possible, but not longer than 14 days after they were exposed. People who have been in close contact with an infected person should talk with their doctor as soon as possible to see if they should get the vaccine.

