



Special Edition Health Bulletin: Hepatitis A (Hep A)



You may have heard about **Hep A** in the news recently.

- Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease that can make you very sick.
- There are outbreaks of Hepatitis A occurring in several states across the United States.
- Hepatitis A continues to increase in Philadelphia.
- Many of the cases in Philadelphia do not have clear risk factors.
- The best way to prevent Hepatitis A infection is to get vaccinated.

What is Hep A?



Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus. It can range from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months. Although rare, Hepatitis A can cause death in some people. Hepatitis A is usually a short-term infection and does not become permanent.

How does Hep A spread?

Germ from poop
(even in small amounts
you can't see)



Sharing needles
or drugs



Sex with someone
who has Hep A



Contaminated
food



Food, including frozen and uncooked or undercooked food, can be contaminated with Hepatitis A.



Although uncommon, Hep A outbreaks have occurred in the United States from people eating contaminated fresh and frozen imported food products. High temperatures, such as boiling or cooking food or liquids for at least 1 minute at 185°F (85°C), kill the virus. Freezing temperatures do not kill the virus.

How do I protect myself?



Get the Hepatitis A shot (vaccine)
at a hospital or clinic



Wash your hands with soap and
water, or use hand sanitizer, after
going to the bathroom



Use condoms



Hep A vaccination is recommended for:

- All children at age 1 year
- Travelers to countries where Hepatitis A is common
- Men who have sex with other men
- People who use or inject drugs
- People who are homeless
- People with liver disease
- People with clotting-factor diseases
- People with direct contact with others who have Hepatitis A
- Any person wishing to obtain protection

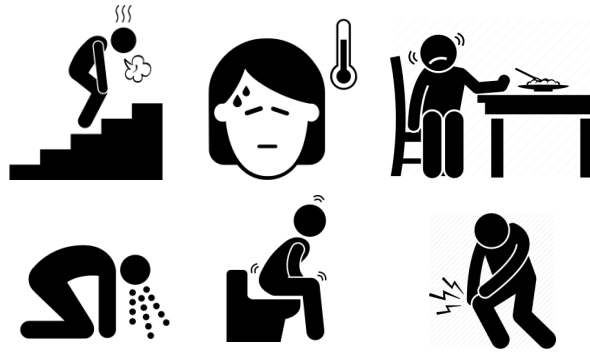


<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/infectious-diseases-related-to-travel/hepatitis-a>

What are the symptoms of Hep A?

Not everyone has symptoms. If symptoms develop, they usually appear 2 to 6 weeks after infection and can include:

- Extreme tiredness and fever
- Loss of appetite
- Stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhea
- Gray stools
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (yellow skin and eyes)



Symptoms are more likely to occur in adults than in children. They usually last less than 2 months, although some people can be ill for as long as 6 months.

To treat the symptoms of Hepatitis A, doctors usually recommend rest, adequate nutrition, and fluids. Some people will need medical care in a hospital.

How serious is Hep A?



Most people who get Hepatitis A feel sick for several weeks, but they usually recover completely and do not have lasting liver damage. In rare cases, Hepatitis A can cause liver failure and death; this is more common in people older than 50 and in people with other liver diseases.

What should I do if I think I have been exposed?



If you have any questions about potential exposure to Hepatitis A, contact your health provider. If you were recently exposed to Hepatitis A virus and have not been vaccinated against Hepatitis A, you might benefit from an injection of either Hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin. However, the vaccine or immune globulin are only effective if given within the first 2 weeks after exposure. **A health professional can decide what is best based on your age and overall health.**

How is Hep A diagnosed?



A doctor can determine if you have Hepatitis A by discussing your symptoms and taking a blood sample.

Need testing, treatment, or vaccination?



Contact your healthcare provider

If you don't have insurance, contact a city health center:

<https://www.phila.gov/services/mental-physical-health/city-health-centers/>

To find a pharmacy near you that offers Hep A vaccine, visit:
<https://www.phila.gov/services/mental-physical-health/get-vaccinated/get-vaccinated-if-you-have-health-insurance/>