

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis (hep a TIE tis) is an infection of the liver. It is sometimes called "yellow jaundice" because some forms of hepatitis cause the skin to turn yellow.

Hepatitis A is caused by a virus found in feces (bowel movements), contaminated water and food that has been handled by infected persons. People are infected by passing the virus from contaminated hands to their mouths or by eating foods that contain the virus. A person can spread the disease to others anytime from 1 to 2 weeks before symptoms appear, through one week after symptoms occur.

The five most important steps to keep the disease from spreading are: 1) good hand washing, 2) plenty of rest, 3) good nutrition, 4) good housekeeping and 5) medical care.

Hand Washing

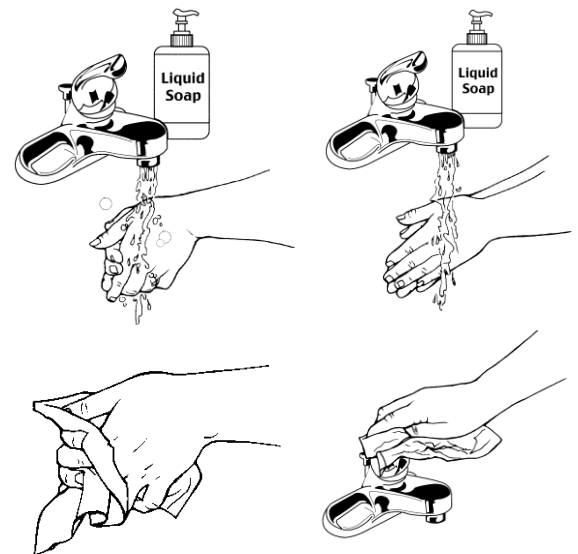
To help stop the spread of this disease, all family members **must wash their hands often and well.**

(Refer to the Helping Hand, *Hand Hygiene*, HH-IV-80). Hands should be washed vigorously, for 15 seconds using soap and warm water, and rinsed very well. Good hand washing is most important before meals, after using the bathroom, after changing a diaper and before preparing or serving food.

Good Housekeeping

To prevent the spread of infection, these steps **must be taken** in the home:

- Clean the bathroom every day. Carefully wash the sink and toilet with household disinfectant containing bleach. Wear rubber gloves to protect your hands. Be sure to flush urine, feces and toilet paper down the toilet.
- If the infected child wears diapers, change the child on a hard surface and disinfect the surface when you are finished. Be sure to wash your hands after changing diapers.
- The home must be free of rodents (rats and mice) and insects (flies and roaches).



Picture 1 Good hand washing is very important!



Picture 2 Clean the bathroom every day.

Good Nutrition and Rest

- All family members should eat a well-balanced diet that includes food from the Food Pyramid.
- All ill family members should get at least 8 hours of sleep each night. Young children who are ill should take naps during the day when possible.

Medical Care

- Your doctor may prescribe medicine for all family members who have been exposed to hepatitis. This medicine will prevent hepatitis if it is taken within two weeks of exposure.
- Someone from the Health Department may visit your home to help you control this disease. They will ask several questions and will answer any questions you may have.
- It is very important to keep all follow-up appointments with the doctor.
- Promptly tell school personnel or childcare providers that your child has hepatitis.

Prevention

There is a vaccine to prevent Hepatitis A. This vaccine is usually started when the child is one year old, but can be given to older children and adults.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your child's doctor if:

- Your child refuses to eat or drink.
- If your child's temperature is 103°F or higher.
- Fever is over 99.6°F for more than 2 days.
- Abdominal discomfort (stomach ache).
- Vomiting (throwing up) more than 2 times in an hour.
- If your child's skin, white part of the eyes, tongue or gums turns yellow.

Return to School or Child Care

If your child is toilet-trained and does not have diarrhea, he or she may return to school or child care when he feels better. A child who is not toilet-trained should stay home for at least 7 days before returning to school or child care. However, your child's doctor should okay the child's return to school or child care.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse, or call _____.