

# Addressing Emergency Responders' Concerns about Hepatitis A

## 1. What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (germ) that is spread from person-to-person. Mild cases can last a few weeks while severe cases can last several months.

## 2. How does hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A spreads by putting something in your mouth (object, food, or drink) that has been in contact with the feces (poop) of an infected person. Hepatitis A can be spread:

- When an individual does not wash their hands after contact with infected stool (e.g., after using the bathroom or changing diapers)
- By having sexual contact with an infected partner
- By consuming food or drinks that are contaminated by the virus

## 3. What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

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

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Grey stool
- Feeling tired
- Stomach pain
- Joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Dark urine
- Yellowing of the skin and eyes
- Nausea
- (pee)

## 4. Who is at risk of getting hepatitis A?

People who are homeless are at the highest risk for getting hepatitis A. Anyone can get hepatitis A, but you are at a higher risk if you:

- Work closely with homeless persons or drug users
- Use recreational drugs
- Live with someone who has hepatitis A
- Are men who have sex with men
- Travel or live in countries where hepatitis A is common
- Have sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis A

## 5. How is hepatitis A treated?

Treatment includes rest, good nutrition, fluids, and medical monitoring. Some people may need to be hospitalized. Most people who get hepatitis A recover completely and don't have lasting liver damage. It's important to see a doctor if you have symptoms of hepatitis A.

## 6. How can first responders protect themselves from infection?

First responders can protect themselves against hepatitis A by using simple precautions such as washing their hands after having contact with another individual and before touching or consuming food. For responders whose work involves regular contact with persons likely to have hepatitis A infection, vaccination can provide additional protection.



## Key Messages:

- Hepatitis A is highly contagious (spreads person-to-person).
- Get vaccinated. Visit your medical provider to get the vaccine.
- Protect yourself by washing your hands and using contact precautions when treating patients with hepatitis A.

## Where can the public go for more information?

Los Angeles County,  
Department of Public Health  
Dial 2-1-1

California Department of  
Public Health  
916-558-1784

Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention  
800-CDC-INFO  
800-232-4636

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