



1. What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (germ). It can last from a few weeks to several months, but it goes away on its own in almost all cases. Hepatitis A doesn't lead to long-term liver problems.

2. How do you get hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is typically spread through contact with infected feces. You can get hepatitis A by:

- Eating contaminated food
- Drinking contaminated water
- Being exposed to the stool (feces) of an infected person (e.g. changing diapers, sexual contact)

3. How do you know if you have hepatitis A?

The most common symptoms of hepatitis A are:

- Diarrhea
- Stomach pain
- Dark color urine
- Fever (up to 102 degrees)
- Yellowing of the skin
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Muscle pain

Some people with hepatitis A do not feel sick, but others get very ill. Symptoms usually appear two to six weeks after being infected, and last about two months, although some people can be ill for as long as six months. A person with no symptoms can still give the illness to others.

4. How is hepatitis A treated?

Hepatitis A goes away on its own in most cases. You can help yourself get better faster by drinking lots of water, eating a healthy mix of foods, and avoiding alcohol. While you have hepatitis A, cut back on daily activities until all of your energy returns. Those who have had hepatitis A before can never get sick from it again.

5. How can hepatitis A be prevented?

- Hepatitis A shots (vaccinations) are the best way to prevent getting it. To find out where to get free shots for adults and children, call 1-800-427-8700.
- To prevent spreading the infection, every member of the household should wash their hands with soap and clean water often, especially at these times:
 - Before eating or preparing food
 - After using the bathroom or changing diapers
 - After handling pets or animals
- Wash and peel all fruits and vegetables before eating.
- Drink bottled water and eat only well cooked food when traveling.
- Avoid sexual practices that might result in oral exposure to stool (e.g.: oral-anal contact).
- Reduce activities and contact with others if you have diarrhea and can't control your bowel movements.

Sources

1. *Hepatitis A*. L.A. County Department of Public Health. www.lapublichealth.org/acd/Diseases/HepA.htm
2. *Hepatitis A*. CA Department of Public Health. ww2.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/HepatitisA.aspx
3. *Hepatitis A*. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HepatitisA.htm

For additional resources, visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.