

# What you need to know about Hepatitis A

## Why do I need to know about this?

Currently, there is a multi-state outbreak involving Hepatitis A and people who:

- Use recreational drugs (injected or not)
- Are men who have sex with other men
- Are homeless

Of the 5 states that border Ohio; Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, and West Virginia have all reported outbreaks of Hepatitis A. Ohio has seen an increase in the number of Hepatitis A cases during 2018, suggesting Ohio may be impacted next.

## What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months.

## Who is at risk?

Although anyone can get Hepatitis A, some people are at greater risk, such as those who:

- Use recreational drugs (injected or not)
- Are men who have sexual encounters with other men
- Have sexual contact with someone who has Hepatitis A
- Has liver disease (such as Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C)
- Are homeless
- Are household members or caregivers of a person infected with Hepatitis A

## How is Hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A is usually spread when a person ingests fecal matter (stool)—even in microscopic amounts—from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by feces or stool from an infected person.

Hepatitis A can be spread when:

- An infected person does not wash his/her hands properly after going to the bathroom and then touches objects or food.
- Someone engages in sexual activities with an infected person (anal-oral contact).

Hepatitis A also can be spread through contaminated food or water. Contamination of food can happen at any point: growing, harvesting, processing, handling, and even after cooking.

## What are the symptoms of Hepatitis A?

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

- Fever
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Grey-colored stools
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (yellowing of skin)

## How is Hepatitis A diagnosed and treated?

A doctor can determine if a person has Hepatitis A by discussing his or her symptoms and taking a blood sample. To treat Hepatitis A, doctors usually recommend rest, adequate nutrition, fluids, and medical monitoring. It can take a few months before people begin to feel better.

## Can Hepatitis A be prevented?

Yes. The best way to prevent Hepatitis A is by getting vaccinated. The Hepatitis A vaccine is safe and effective and given as 2 shots, 6 months apart. Both shots are needed for long-term protection. Ask your healthcare provider for more information. If you do not have a healthcare provider contact your local health department.

## Who should get vaccinated for Hepatitis A?

- All people 1 year and older
- Users of recreational drugs (injection or not)
- Men who have sex with other men
- People with chronic or long-term liver disease, including Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C
- People who have received blood products to help their blood clot

## What else can I do prevent becoming infected with Hepatitis A?

- Wash your hands after using the bathroom and before eating or preparing meals for yourself or others.
- Use your own towels, toothbrushes, and eating utensils.
- Avoid sex with someone who is infected with Hepatitis A.
- Avoid sharing food, drink, or smokes with other people.



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