

Hepatitis A – Information resource for case

What is it?

Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver caused by a virus.

It is different from Hepatitis B and C, and is spread in a different way.

How do you catch Hepatitis A?

You get infected by putting something in your mouth that has the virus on it.

The most common ways people get infected are:

- Swallowing food, water or milk that has the virus in it.
- Eating shellfish from contaminated water.
- Close personal contact with an infected person.

The virus is in the bowel motions (poo) of people who have Hepatitis A. If an infected person doesn't wash their hands properly after going to the toilet, the virus can spread from their hands onto anything that gets touched.

How do you know that you have Hepatitis A?

It can take between 2 to 8 weeks for people to start feeling unwell after catching Hepatitis A. Young children can have the disease and never get any symptoms at all. Because of this, people may pass on the virus without knowing it.

What are the symptoms of Hepatitis A?

Symptoms can include:

- Just feeling "unwell"
- Tiredness, lack of energy
- Not feeling like eating
- Nausea and vomiting
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Itchy skin
- Dark urine (pee)
- Very pale faeces (bowel motions, poo)
- Stomach pain (especially on the right side under the ribs)
- Mild fever
- General aches and pains

If you have been in contact with someone who had Hepatitis A and you get any of the above symptoms, please go and see your doctor.

Hepatitis A is more serious in adults and can last for several months. Most people recover completely from the infection, with no permanent damage to their liver.

Once you have had Hepatitis A you can never get it again.

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What is the best way to stop the spread of Hepatitis A?

- Always wash your hands well with soap and dry them properly, after using the toilet or changing a baby's nappy.
- Always wash and dry your hands well before eating.
- Do not prepare food for others if you are unwell.

For further information, please contact Regional Public Health on 04 570 9002 and ask to speak to a Health Protection Officer, or contact your GP.