

Background:

Hepatitis A is a vaccine preventable, acute communicable liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus-(HAV). The virus is one of several types of hepatitis viruses that cause liver inflammation and affect your liver's ability to function. HAV is found in the stool and blood of people who are infected. Hepatitis A virus is spread when someone ingests the virus (even in microscopic amounts too small to see) through close, personal contact with an infected person, or through eating contaminated food or drink. Not all people with an active infection develop symptoms. Symptoms of hepatitis A typically last two months or less, however a small portion of cases report relapsing or prolonged symptoms up to six months following diagnosis. The best way to prevent hepatitis A is to get vaccinated. There are several prevention measures that can be put in place to prevent the spread of Hepatitis A in community congregate settings, including isolating ill staff and residents and following [contact and standard precautions](#).

Symptoms Associated with Hepatitis A:

Symptoms of hepatitis A virus infection include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Diarrhea
- Clay-colored stool
- Joint pain
- Jaundice

How long does it take from exposure to onset of symptoms?

The average incubation period (the time it takes from when the virus enters the body to when an active infection develops) for hepatitis A is 28 days but can range anywhere from 15-50 days¹.

Risk Factors Associated with Contracting Hepatitis A:

Although anyone can get hepatitis A, certain groups of people are at higher risk for infection including:

- International travelers
- Men who have sex with men
- Persons who use or inject drugs (all those who use illegal drugs)
- Persons with occupational risk for exposure
- Persons who anticipate close personal contact with an international adoptee
- Persons experiencing homelessness

¹<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/hepa.html#:~:text=The%20incubation%20period%20of%20hepatitis,%2C%20dark%20urine%2C%20and%20jaundice.>

- Persons who are incarcerated

Additionally, certain groups are at risk for severe disease including:

- Persons with chronic liver disease, including hepatitis B and hepatitis C
- Persons living with HIV
- Older adults (aged >40 years)

Immediate Next Steps for Case Treatment and Monitoring:

Upon the identification of a resident or staff with symptoms consistent with Hepatitis A:

1. Ask the staff member to return home and follow-up with a medical provider promptly. All staff should be excluded from work until cleared by a medical provider.
2. If a resident is displaying symptoms, they should be isolated away from others and if possible, have their own bathroom. If having a separate bathroom for infected residents is not possible, ensure proper cleaning and disinfection is occurring after each use. Learn more on the difference between cleaning and disinfecting here: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/selected-epa-registered-disinfectants>. Isolation is continued for the first two weeks of the illness, and one week after the onset of jaundice.
3. Following proper diagnosis from a healthcare provider, residents should be placed under [contact precautions](#) (All staff should wear gloves when handling or cleaning any bodily fluids) and avoid contact with other residents for the duration of their illness.
4. Contact the Special Populations team at the Chicago Department of Public Health to report any cases of hepatitis A here: <https://redcap.link/specpopreport>
5. Continue to monitor other staff and residents for signs and symptoms of hepatitis A and connect to care, as necessary.

Case Investigation and Outbreak Response in Community Congregate Settings (Congregate Living Facilities, Shelters, Correctional Settings, etc.):

Upon the identification of a case of hepatitis A within a congregate setting, the facility should reach out to the Special Populations team at CDPH in order to begin the case investigation process and prevent further spread. The facility should also conduct location-based contact tracing in order to determine those who live or work in the facility and subsequently may have been exposed to hepatitis A. Unvaccinated close contacts should then be connected to vaccination as postexposure prophylaxis (PEP). Additionally, anyone who has been exposed to a case of hepatitis A and is considered to be immunocompromised should be connected with a healthcare provider to discuss further prevention measures necessary to protect against the development of hepatitis A.

Additionally, following the identification of hepatitis A within a community congregate setting, facilities should continue to promote proper hand hygiene and increase opportunities for hand hygiene across the facility (placing hand sanitizer in high traffic areas, ensuring soap dispensers are adequately filled, etc.).

Other Recommendations to Prevent the Spread of Hepatitis A:

1. Vaccination is the best way to prevent hepatitis A. The vaccine series usually consists of two shots, given six months apart. Getting both shots provides the best protection against hepatitis A.
2. Practicing good hand hygiene—including thoroughly washing hands with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food—plays an important role in preventing the spread of many illnesses, including hepatitis A.

3. You can prevent infection even after you have been exposed. If you have been exposed to the hepatitis A virus in the last two weeks, talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated. A single shot of the hepatitis A vaccine can help prevent hepatitis A if given within two weeks following an exposure. Depending upon your age and health, your doctor may recommend immune globulin in addition to the hepatitis A vaccine.

For more information on hepatitis A please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm>.

Organization	Contact Information:
CDPH Community Congregate Settings Team	Email: SpecialPops@cityofchicago.org Reporting Link: https://redcap.link/specpopreport