

## **Health Care Education Hepatitis A**



### **Hidaya Foundation**

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*And when I am sick, then He heals me. - - - Al Quran – Ash-Shuraa, Verse 26:80*

## **Hepatitis A**

**What is Hepatitis A and how it can be diagnosed?** Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by Hepatitis A virus (HAV). It can be detected through a blood test.

**Why is the Liver so important?** The liver is the largest, heaviest and one of the most important internal organs. Dark red in color, it weighs 1-1.5 kg and is located behind the lower right part of your ribs. It stores vitamins, sugars, fats and other nutrients from the food you eat and then releases them to the body when needed. It also builds basic chemicals that your body needs to stay healthy. Last but not least, it removes waste products, harmful bacteria and toxic chemicals from your blood. In other words - it is the powerhouse, recycling, and disposal plant of the body. Life is not possible without the liver.

**What are the symptoms?** Persons with Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) infection may not have any signs or symptoms of the disease. Older persons are more likely to have symptoms than children. If symptoms are present, they usually occur abruptly and may include fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal discomfort, diarrhea, dark urine, jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Symptoms usually last less than 2 months; a few persons are ill for as long as 6 months.

**Can Hepatitis A be prevented?** Always wash your hands after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, or before preparing or eating food. Two products are used to prevent HAV infection:

1) Immune globulin: a preparation of antibodies that can be given before exposure for short-term protection against hepatitis A and to those who have already been exposed to HAV; it must be given within 2 weeks after exposure to HAV for maximum protection.

2) Hepatitis A vaccine: recommended (before exposure to HAV) for those who are more likely to get Hepatitis A virus infection or are more likely to get seriously ill if they do get HAV.

**How does HAV Spread?** HAV is spread mainly by oral contact with stool (feces) containing the virus. If contaminated stool gets into the water or food supply, the virus may infect anyone who drinks the water or eats the food. It also occurs if good personal hygiene is not observed.

Casual contact, as in the usual office, factory, or school setting, does not spread the virus. Most infections result from contact with a household member or sex partner who has hepatitis A.

**How do you kill HAV?** HAV can live outside the body for months, depending on the environmental conditions. HAV is killed by heating to 185 degrees F. (85 degrees C.) for one minute. However, HAV can still be spread from cooked food if it gets contaminated after cooking the food. Adequate chlorination of water kills HAV that may get into the water supply.

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**Who should get tested for Hepatitis A?** If you can answer “YES” to any of these questions, please see your doctor immediately because you might be at risk for HAV.

**How Hepatitis A virus impacts health?** Hepatitis A virus causes inflammation of the liver, which leads to further complications and impairs proper functioning of the liver. It could lead to death if not treated.

**Please answer these questions honestly**

Currently, have you:

- |   |            |           |
|---|------------|-----------|
| - Had fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal discomfort, diarrhea, dark urine, and jaundice for long periods of time?      | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| - Shared a household or had sexual contact with someone who has Hepatitis A?  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| - Had a C-section for childbirth (for women)?   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| - Shared I.V. needles for any reason?   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| - Been an employee in a childcare center (especially centers that have children in diapers) where a child or an employee has hepatitis A? | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| - Traveled to country where hepatitis A is common?  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| - Been a resident or staff of institutions for developmentally disabled persons when a resident or an employee has hepatitis A?           | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| - Been Handling HAV-infected animals or worked with HAV in a research laboratory setting?   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| - Had a body piercing (nose, ears, etc.)?   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| - Had multiple sex partners or had sex with some one who fits the above description?  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| Does your work put you in contact with blood, blood products or needles?  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| Have you had a blood transfusion?   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |

**If you have had Hepatitis A in the past, can you get it again?** No. Once you recover from Hepatitis A you develop antibodies that protect your body from future infections and you cannot transmit the virus to others.

**Can I donate blood if I have had any type of viral Hepatitis?** If you had any type of viral Hepatitis since age 11 years, you are not eligible to donate blood. In addition, if you ever tested positive for Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, at any age, you are not eligible to donate, even if you were never sick or jaundiced from the infection.

**Can I get viral Hepatitis from an animal?** No. Hepatitis viruses cannot be transmitted between, or be shared by, animals and humans. Humans are the only natural hosts for Hepatitis A virus.

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Source: Department of Health and Human Services, January 2006 and information available freely on the Internet

**Disclaimer:** All information provided in this flyer is posted for educational purposes only; it is not meant to be used as medical advice. For any advice, diagnosis, and treatment consult your personal physician.