

FOCUS *on health*

Physicians Caring for Kentucky

HEPATITIS A

Hepatitis A is a viral infection. It is in the family of hepatitis viruses, along with hepatitis B and hepatitis C, which may be more well known. Symptoms usually last less than two months, but in some cases can last for as long as six months.

How is it contracted/spread?

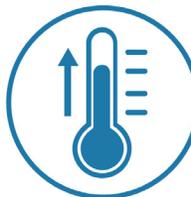
Hepatitis A usually spreads when a person unknowingly ingests the virus from objects, food, or drinks contaminated by small, undetected amounts of stool from an infected person. Hepatitis A can also spread from close personal contact with an infected person such as through sex or caring for someone who is ill.

Can it be prevented?

The best way to prevent hepatitis A is through vaccination with the hepatitis A vaccine. Practicing good hand hygiene – including thoroughly washing hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food – plays an important role in preventing the spread of hepatitis A.

In the United States, chlorination of water kills hepatitis A virus that enters the water supply, so you don't need to be worried about catching hepatitis A from most drinking water sources. For known areas of hepatitis A contamination, bleach water solution is recommended for cleaning. Heating to 180 degrees for one minute will kill any potential virus on contaminated food.

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF HEPATITIS



FEVER



FATIGUE



NAUSEA/VOMITING



LOSS OF APPETITE



JOINT PAIN



DARK URINE



YELLOW SKIN AND EYES



CLAY-COLORED STOOL



ABDOMINAL PAIN

SOURCE: Lori A. Caloia, M.D., Medical Director, Louisville Metro Public Health & Wellness

ECONOMIC IMPACT IN KENTUCKY

Nearly **50%**
of all ill adults
are hospitalized

While the exact value of the economic impact of the hepatitis A virus in Kentucky is unknown at this time, it is an expensive disease. With nearly 50% of all ill adults being hospitalized, those costs add up quickly. Couple that with the time an ill individual may spend out of work, and there are significant economic losses.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT IT?

Get vaccinated

The hepatitis A vaccine is a very effective way to protect yourself against the virus. A single hepatitis A vaccine protects almost 100% of people for up to 10 years. For lifetime protection, a second vaccine should be administered six months after the first. For those who need the hepatitis B vaccination, a combination vaccine is also available (hepatitis A-hepatitis B vaccine) that can be given in three doses, with the second dose coming one month after the first and the third dose six months after the first.

No serious side effects have been reported from the hepatitis A vaccine. Soreness at the injection site is the most common side effect reported. As with any medicine, there is always a small risk that a serious problem could occur after someone gets the vaccine. However, the potential risks associated with hepatitis A are much greater than the potential risks associated with the vaccine. Since the licensure of the first hepatitis A vaccine in 1995, millions of doses have been given in the United States and worldwide.

Wash your hands

Always wash your hands, especially before eating or making food, and after using the bathroom.

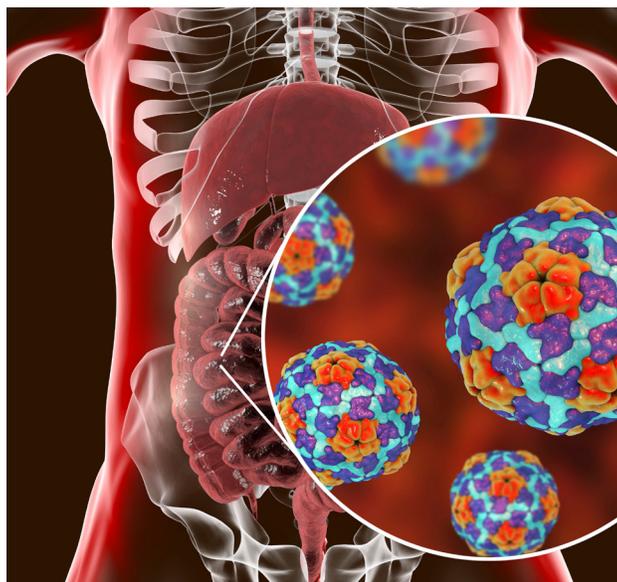


Who is at risk?

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

- Travel to or live in countries where hepatitis A is common
- Have sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis A
- Use recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- Have clotting-factor disorders, such as hemophilia
- Are household members or caregivers of a person infected with hepatitis A

SOURCE: U.S. Department for Health and Human Services



Did you know?

Effective July 1, 2018, all Kentucky students in kindergarten through 12th grade must receive two doses of the hepatitis A vaccine to attend school or receive a provisional certificate of immunization (unless their parents claim an exemption).

May is Hepatitis Awareness Month

The stories and information in *Focus on Health* are for your enlightenment and enjoyment as well as to inform you of contributions being made to Kentucky life by members of the medical profession across the state. No article appearing in *Focus on Health* should be considered diagnostic. If you have questions concerning any health related issue, please talk with your physician. *Focus on Health* is published quarterly by the Kentucky Medical Association, 9300 Shelbyville Road, Suite 850, Louisville, KY, 40222. www.kyma.org