

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis is a term that means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis A is an infectious disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. The body rids itself of the hepatitis A virus within 6 months. But in severe cases of hepatitis A, symptoms can last for several months and be debilitating. In rare cases, hepatitis A can also lead to liver failure and death.

Many people living with hepatitis A will not develop symptoms, or experience only mild symptoms. If they do develop symptoms, these can include fever, fatigue, loss in appetite, nausea, stomach pain, dark urine, and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice).

How does hepatitis A infection happen?

The hepatitis A virus enters the body mainly through the mouth. It is usually spread by coming into contact with an infected person's feces—by drinking contaminated water. Uncommonly, hepatitis A can also be spread through blood, such as by sharing needles.

While anyone can catch hepatitis A, there are certain factors that put people more at risk of experiencing severe infection. Those more at risk of severe infection include people with chronic liver disease, who have a weakened immune system, or who are over 60.

Hepatitis A immunization is safe and effective.

Anyone who wants to lower their risk of hepatitis A infection, or people at increased risk of severe illness—such as travellers—should be immunized against this disease.



Talk to your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or local public health office about getting yourself or your child immunized against hepatitis A.