**<https://tpchd.org/healthy-places/food-safety/prevent-hepatitis-a/>**

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**Prevent Hepatitis A**

**Aug. 23, 2019**

Washington State Department of Health declared a hepatitis A outbreak. Four Washington counties have a total of 18 confirmed cases of hepatitis A. Pierce County currently has no cases. Large hepatitis A outbreaks have occurred across the United States since 2016.

**What is hepatitis A?**

Hepatitis A is a virus. It can cause liver damage and other health problems. Symptoms usually appear 2 to 6 weeks after a person gets the virus. A person with hepatitis A can spread it to others as early as 2 weeks before their symptoms start. Common symptoms include:

* Fatigue.
* Fever.
* Nausea.
* Stomach pain.
* Vomiting.
* Diarrhea.
* Dark pee.
* Jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin).

**How does hepatitis A spread?**

Hepatitis A usually spreads when an infected person doesn’t wash their hands well after using the toilet. The virus in their poop gets on their hands and spreads to things they touch, like food. When another person eats the contaminated food, they get the virus.

An infected person can spread the virus before they have symptoms. The virus is commonly spread to others by:

* Not washing hands well after using the bathroom.
* Working with food when sick.
* Touching ready-to-eat food with bare hands.

**How can you protect yourself, your employees and your customers?**

* Share this flyer with your employees—[English](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Hepatitis-A-Health-Warning-for-Food-Workers.pdf), [Spanish](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Hepatitis-A-Health-Warning-for-Food-Workers-Spanish.pdf).
* Hang up this poster—[English](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Hepatitis-A-Health-Warning-for-Food-Workers.pdf), [Spanish](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Hepatitis-A-Health-Warning-for-Food-Workers-Spanish.pdf).
* Make sure employees wash their hands properly.
  + Hang up these posters about [how to wash hands](https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/Pubs/130-012.pdf) and [when to wash hands](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/When-to-Wash-Your-Hands.pdf).
* Do not allow bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food.
  + Hang up this poster about [preventing bare hand contact](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Do-Not-Touch-Ready-to-Eat-Foods-with-Bare-Hands-1.pdf).
* Do not work with food when sick.
  + Hang up this poster about [sick food workers](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Sick-Food-Workers.pdf).
* Encourage your employees to get vaccinated against hepatitis A.
* Make sure the restroom is [cleaned to kill hepatitis A](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Help-prevent-the-spread-of-Hepatitis-A.pdf).

**Why is this important?**

Hepatitis A can quickly spread through food and from person to person. **Hepatitis A causes higher rates of hospitalization and death in people with Hepatitis C, diabetes and other health problems**. Read [this flyer](https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Hepatitis-A-Health-for-food-workers.pdf) to learn more.

**Questions?**

Contact us at (253) 649-1417 or [food@tpchd.org](mailto:food@tpchd.org).