

Section: Medical Exposure Control Plan – Information Fact Sheets
Subject: HEPATITIS-A
Section #: 383.04
Issue Date: March 21, 2011
Revision Date:
Approved By:

Page 1 of 2

Michael Lozano, Jr., M.D., HCFR Medical Director



1. Identification

- a. Acute viral hepatitis is a common, worldwide disease that has different causes; each type shares clinical, biochemical, and morphologic features. Liver infections caused by non-hepatitis viruses (e.g., Epstein-Barr virus, yellow fever virus, cytomegalovirus) generally are not termed acute viral hepatitis. At least 5 specific viruses appear to be responsible.
- b. It is the most common cause of acute viral hepatitis and is particularly common among children and young adults. In some countries, > 75% of adults have been exposed. HAV spreads primarily by fecal-oral contact and thus may occur in areas of poor hygiene. Waterborne and food-borne epidemics occur, especially in underdeveloped countries

2. Infectious Agents

- a. Hepatitis A virus is a positive-strand RNA virus. It has been classified as Hepatovirus, a member of the family Picornaviridae.

3. Susceptibility

- a. In developing countries adults are usually immune and epidemics of Hepatitis A are uncommon. Where environmental sanitation is poor, infection is common and occurs at an early age. People can spread the virus to others before developing symptoms. Hepatitis A immunity after infection probably lasts for life.

4. Mode of Transmission

- a. Person-to-person via the fecal-oral route (typically an infected person not washing their hands prior to being involved in food preparation).
- b. Infectious agent reaches its peak in feces a week or two prior to symptoms.
- c. Common sources of outbreaks have been related to contaminated water; food from infected food handlers; raw or uncooked mollusks from contaminated waters; and even contaminated produce.
- d. Hepatitis A is not spread from kissing, sneezing, or by saliva; however, vomitus is a mode of transmission.

5. Incubation Period

- a. 15 to 50 days depending on the dose with the average being 28 to 30 days.
- b. This time frame is forgiving with respect to allowing time for Immune Globulin (IG) to be given.

6. Period of Communicability

- a. Studies have indicated that the maximum infectivity in humans is during the last half of the incubation period and continuing for a few days after the onset of jaundice.

7. Isolation

- a. Universal precautions are adequate; gloves, mask, and goggles. Diligent hand washing is prudent.

8. Exposure Management

- a. Diagnosed with a blood test. There is NO medicine or treatment that will make the symptoms go away faster.

Section: Medical Exposure Control Plan – Information Fact Sheets
Subject: HEPATITIS-A
Section #: 383.04
Issue Date: March 21, 2011
Revision Date:
Approved By:

Page 2 of 2

Michael Lozano, Jr., M.D., HCFR Medical Director



- b. Administration of Immune Globulin (IG) can be of some benefit (see vaccination).
- c. Alcohol should be avoided because it can increase liver damage.
- d. Restrictions on diet or activity, including commonly prescribed bed rest, have no scientific basis.
- e. Most patients may safely return to work after jaundice resolves, even if AST or ALT levels are slightly elevated.

9. Vaccination

- a. Immune Globulin (IG) prevents someone who has been exposed to Hepatitis A from getting the disease if given within 14 days from exposure. IG is effective 80 – 90% of the time and protects against Hepatitis A for about 3 months.
- b. Havrix (Vaqta) is an active immunization against Hepatitis A. It is given via the IM route and a booster shot (6 – 12 months after the first dose) is necessary if prolonged immunity is desired.
- c. Healthcare providers should strongly consider getting vaccinated!

10. References

- a. Professional Guide to Diseases, Sixth Edition 1998, Springhouse Corp., Springhouse, Penn.
- b. Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, Sixteenth Edition 1995, American Public Health Assoc., Washington, D.C.
- c. Communicable Disease Information, Seattle – King County Department of Public Health web site, www.metrokc.gov/health/prevent/hepa.htm
- d. Infectious Diseases, Armstrong & Cohen, Mosby 1999, Volumes 1 & 2.