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URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/hepatitisa.html>

Hepatitis A

Also called: HAV

What is hepatitis?

Hepatitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/hepatitis.html>] is inflammation of the liver [<https://medlineplus.gov/liverdiseases.html>] .

Inflammation is swelling that happens when tissues of the body are injured or infected. It can damage your liver. This swelling and damage can affect how well your liver functions.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a type of viral hepatitis. It causes an acute, or short-term, infection. This means that people usually get better without treatment after a few weeks.

Thanks to a vaccine, hepatitis A is not very common in the United States.

What causes hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is caused by the hepatitis A virus. The virus spreads through contact with an infected person's stool. This can happen if you:

- Eat food made by someone who has the virus and did not properly wash their hands after using the bathroom
- Drink contaminated water or eat foods that were rinsed with contaminated water
- Have close personal contact with someone who has hepatitis A. This could be through certain types of sex (like oral-anal sex), taking care of someone who is ill, or using illegal drugs [<https://medlineplus.gov/druguseandaddiction.html>] with others.

Who is at risk for hepatitis A?

Although anyone can get hepatitis A, you are at higher risk if you:

- Travel to developing countries
- Have sex with someone who has hepatitis A
- Are a man who has sex with men
- Use illegal drugs
- Are experiencing homelessness [<https://medlineplus.gov/homelessnessandhealth.html>]
- Live with or care for someone who has hepatitis A
- Live with or care for a child recently adopted from a country where hepatitis A is common

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Not everyone with hepatitis A has symptoms. Adults are more likely to have symptoms than children. If you do have symptoms, they usually start 2 to 7 weeks after infection. They can include:

- Dark yellow urine
- Diarrhea [<https://medlineplus.gov/diarrhea.html>]
- Fatigue [<https://medlineplus.gov/fatigue.html>]

- Fever
- Gray- or clay-colored stools
- Joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and/or vomiting [<https://medlineplus.gov/nauseaandvomiting.html>]
- Abdominal pain [<https://medlineplus.gov/abdominalpain.html>]
- Yellowish eyes and skin, called jaundice [<https://medlineplus.gov/jaundice.html>]

The symptoms usually last less than 2 months, although some people can be ill for as long as 6 months.

You are at a higher risk of getting a more severe infection from hepatitis A if you also have HIV [<https://medlineplus.gov/hiv.html>] , hepatitis B [<https://medlineplus.gov/hepatitisb.html>] , or hepatitis C [<https://medlineplus.gov/hepatitisc.html>] .

What other problems can hepatitis A cause?

In rare cases, hepatitis A may lead to liver failure. This is more common in adults over age 50 and in people who have another liver [<https://medlineplus.gov/liverdiseases.html>] .

How is hepatitis A diagnosed?

To diagnose hepatitis A, your health care provider may use many tools:

- A medical history, which includes asking about your symptoms
- A physical exam
- Blood tests, including tests for viral hepatitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/hepatitis-panel/>]

What are the treatments for hepatitis A?


There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A. The best way to recover is to rest, drink plenty of liquids, and eat healthy foods. Your provider may also suggest medicines to help relieve symptoms. In more severe cases, you may need care in a hospital.

Can hepatitis A be prevented?



The best way to prevent hepatitis A is to get the hepatitis A vaccine. It is also important to have good hygiene [<https://medlineplus.gov/germsandhygiene.html>] , especially washing your hands thoroughly after you go to the bathroom.

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Start Here

- Hepatitis A [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/hepatitis-a/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/hepatitis-a-es/?adfree=true>]
- Hepatitis A [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hepatitis-a/symptoms-causes/syc-20367007?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- Hepatitis A [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/liver-disease/viral-hepatitis/hepatitis-a>]
 **Easy-to-Read** (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-higado/hepatitis-viral/hepatitis-a>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Hepatitis Panel [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/hepatitis-panel/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-hepatitis/>]
- Liver Function Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/liver-function-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-funcionales-hepaticas/>]

Prevention and Risk Factors

- Hepatitis A Vaccine [<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis-a/vaccination/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Hepatitis A Vaccine: What You Need to Know [<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/current-vis/downloads/hep-a.pdf>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) - **PDF**
Also in Spanish [https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/vis/spanish_hepatitis_a.pdf]
- Hepatitis A: Questions and Answers [<https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/catg.d/p4204.pdf>] (Immunization Action Coalition) - **PDF**


Related Issues

- Hepatitis A Basics [<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis-a/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Infectious Diseases in Persons Who Inject Drugs [<https://www.cdc.gov/persons-who-inject-drugs/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Travelers' Health: Hepatitis A [<https://www.cdc.gov/yellow-book/hcp/travel-associated-infections-diseases/hepatitis-a.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Statistics and Research

- FastStats: Viral Hepatitis [<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/hepatitis.htm>] (National Center for Health Statistics)
- Viral Hepatitis Surveillance Report: United States, 2020 [<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis-surveillance-2020/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Clinical Trials


- ClinicalTrials.gov: Hepatitis A [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Hepatitis+A%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Determining the burden of foodborne hepatitis A spread by food handlers:... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40666149>]
- Article: Development of a direct whole genome sequencing for hepatitis A virus... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40640417>]
- Article: Association between hepatitis A B vaccination and hearing loss across frequencies... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40603463>]
- Hepatitis A -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Hepatitis+A%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>]
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>] 

Children

- Hepatitis [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/hepatitis.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/hepatitis.html>]

Hepatitis A [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/vaccine-preventable-diseases/Pages/Hepatitis-A.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/spanish/health-issues/vaccine-preventable-diseases/paginas/hepatitis-a.aspx>]

Teenagers

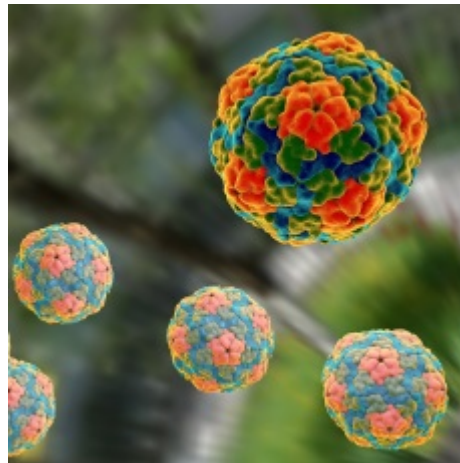
- Hepatitis [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/hepatitis.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/hepatitis.html>]

Men

- Protect Yourself against Hepatitis A and B: A Guide for Gay and Bisexual Men [<https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/catg.d/p4115.pdf>] (Immunization Action Coalition) - **PDF**
Also in Spanish [<https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/catg.d/p4115-01.pdf>]

Patient Handouts

- Hepatitis A [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000278.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000278.htm>]
- Hepatitis A - children [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007670.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007670.htm>]
- Hepatitis A Vaccine: What You Need to Know [<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/current-vis/downloads/hep-a.pdf>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) - **PDF**
Also in Spanish [https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/vis/spanish_hepatitis_a.pdf]
- Hepatitis virus panel [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003558.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003558.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Hepatitis A [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000278.htm>]

Hepatitis A - children [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007670.htm>]

Hepatitis virus panel [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003558.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Hepatitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/hepatitis.html>]

Hepatitis B [<https://medlineplus.gov/hepatitisb.html>]

Hepatitis C [<https://medlineplus.gov/hepatitisc.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Hepatitis A* is the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/hepatitisa.html>] on *Hepatitis A*

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