

## Talk to your Doctor if you are concerned about Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is an illness that your doctor notifies to the Medical Officer of Health at your local public health service, who will:

- Arrange for follow-up
- Offers protection to contacts, and
- Check for a source.

### For further information, contact:

- Your local doctor or practice nurse
- Your local Public Health Nurse
- Communicable Diseases at Community and Public Health



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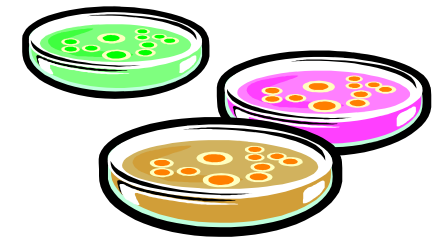
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Communicable Diseases  
Community and Public Health  
(a division of the Canterbury District Health Board)  
October 2011  
Code/Reference: MED0007

# Hepatitis A



# Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

# What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver that causes inflammation and stops the liver working properly.

A person can have hepatitis with no symptoms at all (especially children). The hepatitis A virus can be passed on to others.

The symptoms may include:

- nausea and vomiting
- yellow eyes or skin (jaundice)
- dark urine
- pale faeces
- feeling unwell
- lack of energy
- not feeling like eating
- stomach upset and pains
- fever
- general aches and pains

If someone is unwell with one or more of the above signs, or may have been in contact with someone with hepatitis, they should talk to a doctor.

## How is Hepatitis A Diagnosed?

A blood test will show if someone has hepatitis A infection or if they are immune to it.

## How is Hepatitis A spread?

It is spread from person to person by ingestion of food or water contaminated by infected faeces or through direct contact by the faecal-oral route. Specifically it is passed on through:

- Poor hand washing after toileting
- Close personal contact—including sexual
- Sharing personal things with an infected person (toothbrushes, facecloths, towels, etc)
- Contaminated water or milk
- Contaminated food—including shellfish, from infected sewage.

The most infectious period for hepatitis A is usually from two weeks before the onset of symptoms until one week after the onset of jaundice.

## How Can You Stop Hepatitis A From Spreading?

**Thorough** hand-washing with soap and water and **thorough** drying stops the infection from being passed on to other people.

General household hygiene is advised at all times and includes thorough hand-washing and drying in the following situations:

- After going to the toilet or changing baby's nappies
- Before eating
- Before and after preparing food
- Washing hands before eating
- Washing fruits, berries, salads and vegetables before serving.

Bed-linen, underpants, towels and handkerchiefs used during the illness should be washed in hot water and detergent.



## What About Hepatitis A Prevention?

Close contacts of the person with the hepatitis A virus may be offered an injection of antibodies (immune globulin) for short term protection.

Immunisation is available for long-term protection against hepatitis A.