

# Hepatitis A

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## What is hepatitis A?

**Hepatitis A** [hep-uh-TAHY-tis] is a type of liver infection that can spread from one person to another. Hepatitis A can be a mild illness (lasting 1 to 2 weeks) or a more serious one (lasting several weeks to months). Most people who get hepatitis A get better within 2 weeks to 6 months and don't have any liver damage. A vaccine is available to help prevent hepatitis A infections.

## What causes it?

Hepatitis A infections are caused by the spread of the **hepatitis A virus**, a germ found in the stool (poop) of a person who has the infection. If someone with hepatitis A doesn't wash their hands well after using the bathroom, the virus stays on their hands and spreads to things they touch. Putting something in your mouth that the infected person touched—such as food they prepared—can make you sick.

Rarely, hepatitis A infections are caused by eating raw or undercooked food when polluted water makes those foods unsafe to eat. Hepatitis A can also sometimes spread to others through sexual contact.

## What are the symptoms?

People with hepatitis A usually have these symptoms:

- Fever
- Tiredness
- Nausea
- Poor appetite (not wanting to eat)
- Dark-colored urine (pee)
- Abdominal (belly) pain
- Yellow-colored skin or whites of the eyes

## How is it diagnosed and treated?

A healthcare provider may think you have hepatitis A from the symptoms you describe. Your provider will need to test a sample of your blood to be sure.

There is no special treatment for hepatitis A. Your healthcare provider may suggest treating the symptoms at home to help keep you more comfortable until the illness ends. If you have a more serious infection, you may need to stay at a hospital for a short time.

## Who is at risk for getting hepatitis A?

People who have a greater chance of getting hepatitis A include those who have not had the vaccine and:

- Travel to or live in countries where hepatitis A is common, or care for someone recently adopted from one of those countries
- Live with or have sex with someone who has hepatitis A
- Are men who have sex with men
- Use illegal drugs
- Have a blood clotting problem such as **hemophilia** [hee-muh-FIL-ee-uh]

## How do I keep from spreading it?

You can prevent the spread of hepatitis A by:

- Washing hands carefully after using the bathroom and before preparing or serving food (see page 2)
- Keeping your kitchen and other surfaces clean
- Having those close to you—such as people in your home or a sex partner—talk to their doctor or health department about getting a hepatitis A vaccine

## What else happens if I have hepatitis A?

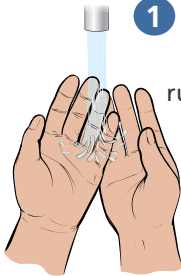
The law requires hepatitis A infections to be reported to a health department. A public health nurse may contact you and ask for more information about the food you've eaten, where you've traveled, and your contact with water. The health department keeps the information private and uses it to help prevent hepatitis A infections in other people.

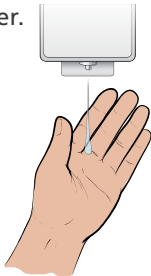
## Where can I learn more?


For more information about hepatitis A, whether or not you are at risk, and where to get a vaccine, contact your doctor, your local or state health department, or Infection Control at any Intermountain hospital. Use the space below to write down your questions.

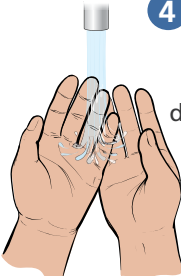


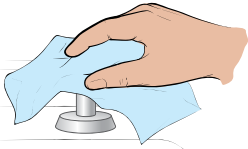
### Hand washing with soap and water

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**1** Wet hands with warm, running water.
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**2** Apply liquid soap, or use a clean bar of soap. Lather well.
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**3** Rub your hands together vigorously for at least 15 to 20 seconds. Be sure to scrub all surfaces of your hands and fingers.
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**4** Rinse well. Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel.
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**5** Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

### Hand washing with a hand sanitizer

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**1** Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Apply it to the palm of your hand. Read the label to see how much to apply.
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**2** Be sure to cover all surfaces of your hands and fingers. Rub your hands together until they are dry.

Healthcare providers can spread the germs if they don't wash their hands often enough. If you don't see your healthcare providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.



### Questions for my doctor:

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