Hepatitis A Facts and Information

It’s important to understand the facts about hepatitis A, the symptoms, treatment, and most importantly how to prevent it.

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What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver that can cause mild to severe illness.

How Is Hepatitis A Transmitted?

The hepatitis A virus (HAV) can be transmitted through ingestion of contaminated food or water or through direct contact with someone who is infected with hepatitis A.

Symptoms

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark Urine
- Diarrhea
- Clay-colored bowel movements
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (yellowing on the eyes and skin)

Symptoms can normally last 2 months and in some cases up to 6 months. Hepatitis A is not a chronic condition like other types of hepatitis.

Can Hepatitis A live outside the body on surfaces?

The CDC states, hepatitis A can live outside the body for months, depending on the environmental conditions.

Treatment

There is no medication to treat hepatitis A. General health practice of managing symptoms is best. Get plenty of rest, manage nausea, drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and keep fever down, avoid all alcohol and manage all medications with caution. See your physician for tests and be monitored until all symptoms resolve.

Recommendations

The Mayo Clinic recommendations these precautions if you or someone in your household has hepatitis A:

- Avoid sexual activity. Many kinds of sexual activity can spread hepatitis A to your partner. Condoms will not be adequate protection in this case.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after using the toilet and changing diapers. Scrub your hands vigorously (even under nails) for a 20 seconds or more and rinse well. Dry your hands with a disposable towel.
- Don’t prepare food for others while you’re infected with hepatitis A. With hepatitis A you can easily pass the infection to others.

Vaccine

All adults and children at least 1-year-old should receive the hepatitis A vaccine.

For more in-depth information about hepatitis A:

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Mayo Clinic

If you have been diagnosed with chronic liver disease, you need to be vaccinated for hepatitis A and B. Talk to your liver specialist about proactive measures you need to take.

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