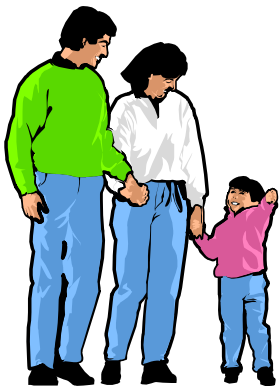


Hepatitis

What is Hepatitis?

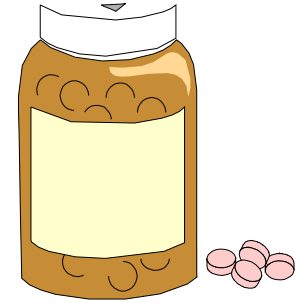
- Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV).
- Hepatitis needs a host in order to survive. Humans make a perfect host. Once inside you, the viruses reproduce. The viruses are then excreted in feces. If the feces contaminate food or water, humans that ingest the contaminated food or water can become infected. The viruses are dangerous because they survive outside the body longer than bacteria. They are also more resistant to chlorination.



How Can I Get Hepatitis?

- You can get hepatitis A by:
 - Not washing your hands before touching food, after using the bathroom or changing diapers, after working or playing outside, and after handling animals or animal waste.
 - Swallowing contaminated water or food.
 - Eating raw or undercooked fish from water containing sewage.
 - Eating fruits, vegetables or other foods that have not been washed.
 - Eating foods that have been contaminated during handling.
- HAV is spread by putting something in your mouth that has been contaminated with the stool or body fluids of someone with Hepatitis A.
- This virus is spread quickest:
 - In places where there are poor sanitary conditions.
 - Where good personal hygiene is not practiced.

- Viruses are a threat because medicine and drugs don't work well against them.



- Viruses can enter the water supply through cross-connections with sewer lines.
- Hepatitis virus can be in your blood and stool for 2-3 weeks before symptoms develop and 2-3 weeks afterward. During this time it can spread.
- A vaccine is available to protect against HAV. For more information contact your physician or local health department.

How Can I Keep My Family From Getting Hepatitis?

- Make sure everyone washes their hands:
 - Before handling or eating food.
 - After using the bathroom or changing diapers.
 - After working or playing outside.
 - After handling animals or animal waste.
- Wash fruits and vegetables well before eating them.
- Don't allow sewage to go out straight pipes. Make sure your septic system is working right.
- Make sure your well or cistern is properly maintained and is located in the right place.
- If a family member gets Hepatitis A, clean toilets and floors with a disinfectant. Flush contaminated stool directly down the toilet and wash hands afterward.

What are the Symptoms of Hepatitis A?

- Yellowing of the eyes and skin
- Tiredness and weakness
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Brownish or tea colored urine
- Fever
- Stomach ache



Written by: Denise Hoffman, Linda Heaton, Kim Henken and Jenny Cocanougher.

This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under special project number EWQI-10395.

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.

Original April, 1999. Revised February, 2007 by Ashley Osborne, Extension Associate for ENRI.

Hepatitis A

What Is It?

How Can I Get It?

What are the Symptoms?

What Can I Do to Protect My Family?

