

OA Reablement service	OA Day Care	OA Residential Care	Domiciliary Services	DMH Day Services	DMH Supported Living	DMH Residential Services	EIA'd
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

I3 HEPATITIS A

What is Hepatitis A?

It is a type of virus (germ) which may cause:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhoea
- Fever
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Malaise
- Dark coloured urine
- Sometimes jaundice – yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes

But often a person (especially children) may not have any signs or symptoms of the disease.

Hepatitis A can only be confirmed from a laboratory test.

Who can it effect?

ANYONE who is not immune but particularly children and young adults, as many adults over 40 years have already developed immunity. In general severity of symptoms increases with age.

Symptoms usually last less than 2 months, but a few people are ill for several months.

The incubation period (the time taken from swallowing the virus until the illness starts) can be between 15 and 50 days, but averages 28 days.

How is Hepatitis A caught?

- It can be spread from person to person by swallowing hepatitis A virus which has been passed from the bowel of someone who is carrying hepatitis A. For this reason, the virus is more easily spread in areas of the world where there are poor sanitary conditions or in circumstances where good personal hygiene is not observed.
- Infections can result from contact with a household member or sexual partner who already has the hepatitis A infection.

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- It can also be caught from contaminated food and water e.g. raw or undercooked contaminated shell fish.
- It is also associated with eating contaminated food or drinking water when travelling abroad to a country where hepatitis A is more common than the UK.

How do you prevent Hepatitis A?

- By good hygiene practices, particularly hand washing and environmental cleaning. **Always wash hands thoroughly** with soap and warm water after going to the toilet and before preparing, serving and eating food.
- Always ensure that toilets are cleaned thoroughly after someone known to have hepatitis A infection has used it.
- Avoid eating raw and undercooked shellfish such as oysters, mussels etc.
- Avoid swimming in potentially contaminated water.
- Only drink water from safe sources – drink bottled water (with a seal) when travelling to parts of the world where the drinking water may be of poor standard.
- By being vaccinated if you are travelling abroad to a country which has a higher incidence of hepatitis A than the UK. Your GP or practice nurse will advise you about this.
- Cases of hepatitis A in homosexual men are increasing in the UK at present as immunisation should be sought by those who may be at risk.
- There is a vaccine which can offer some protection against hepatitis A and is recommended for gay men, travel abroad to countries with a high incidence of hepatitis A and for intravenous drug users.

Do you need to stay off work?

YES – for seven days after the start of the symptoms e.g. jaundice

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If you work as a food handler with young children or in healthcare, you must inform your employer and / or seek advice from your local Environmental Health Department.

If you or a member of your household has Hepatitis A infection:

Ensure you and all household members wash their hands thoroughly with warm water and soap;

- After using or cleaning the toilet
- After attending to another person who has diarrhoea/vomiting
- After changing a baby's nappy
- After handling or washing soiled clothes and bedding
- Before eating, preparing or serving food.

Where possible, do **not** prepare food for your family or anyone else.

Ensure each person affected has their own towel for drying their hands, the use of good quality paper towels are recommended for use in communal setting such as schools.

Ensure young children are supervised when washing hands, or have their hands washed for them.

Wash soiled clothes, bedding and towels on a hot cycle of the washing machine.

Keep soiled washing separate from the rest of the washing – wash separately and dispose of excess 'soil' down the toilet prior to washing.

Clean toilet seats, flush handles and taps more frequently than normal with hot soapy water. The toilet bowl should be cleaned with a toilet brush and toilet cleaner. Wear rubber gloves to clean the toilet and keep them for this use only. Wash hands after removing the gloves.

If you are using a disinfectant or bleach, ensure that it conforms to a British Standard and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Keep all chemical cleaning agents in a **safe place, locked away from children**. Do not mix cleaning materials.

Where possible stay away from other people until your symptoms have stopped (at least seven days after the start of the jaundice), especially vulnerable people like the elderly and the very young.

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