



Hepatitis A

What is Hepatitis A?

- 💧 Hepatitis A is a **viral** disease that causes inflammation of the liver.
- 💧 The incubation period can be two to six weeks.
- 💧 The symptoms are fatigue, loss of appetite, sensitive and tender liver, dislike of fatty foods, chalk white stools, yellow discoloration of the skin and the whites of the eyes (jaundice) and sometimes diarrhoea.
- 💧 Some cases of Hepatitis A are completely without symptoms, but such patients can still be infectious. In such cases diagnosis is made on blood tests.
- 💧 Most patients recover completely and chronic infections occur rarely and usually does not suffer from long-term effects.

How is Hepatitis A transmitted?

- 💧 Transmission is mainly through:
 - ✓ the faecal-oral route
 - ✓ drinking contaminated water
 - ✓ eating contaminated food
 - ✓ close personal contact.

How can Hepatitis A patients be treated?

- 💧 Symptoms can be treated with appropriate medicine, good bed rest and by avoiding alcohol until the liver has fully recovered.
- 💧 In acute cases, hospitalisation may be necessary.

How can Hepatitis A be prevented?

- 💧 Do not drink untreated water.
- 💧 Disinfect water by adding one teaspoon domestic bleach to 20 litres of water and waiting one hour before drinking. If water remains cloudy, add another 2 to 3 teaspoons of bleach.
- 💧 If bleach is not available, cook water vigorously for 5 minutes and simmer afterwards for 15 minutes, to disinfect the water.
- 💧 Proper personal hygiene and superb cleanliness in the kitchen is essential when preparing food.
- 💧 Proper and effective sanitation practices.
- 💧 Vaccinations are available and vaccination with immune globulins within 2 weeks of contact with an infected person may prevent infection.
- 💧 Practice safe sex.

Reference: DWAF (2003). Management of water-related microbial diseases, RSA

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