



HEALTH SERVICES  
**HEPATITIS A INFORMATION**

**Identification/Infectious Agent**

Hepatitis A (Viral) - onset is usually abrupt with fever, malaise, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting diarrhea, dark urine, abdominal discomfort, followed within a few days by jaundice (yellow skin). The disease varies in clinical severity from a mild illness lasting 1 -2 weeks, to a severely disabling disease lasting several months (rare). Convalescence is often prolonged. In general, severity increases with age. Diagnosis is established by the demonstration of IgM antibodies against Hepatitis A virus in the serum of acutely or recently ill patients. IgM anti HAV may remain detectable for 4-6 months after onset. Once you have had Hepatitis A, you cannot get it again.

**Mode of Transmission**

Fecal/oral routes, or through foods contaminated by infected food handlers, especially foods not cooked after handling. The virus is usually spread from person to person by putting something in the mouth (food, drinking cups, or eating utensils) that has been handled by a person with Hepatitis A. May be found in raw or under cooked shellfish harvested from contaminated waters.

**Incubation Period**

15 to 50 days (average 28-30)

**Period of Communicability**

About 1-2 weeks, before onset of jaundice and 7-10 days after onset of jaundice. Most cases are probably noninfectious after the first week of jaundice, although prolonged viral excretion (up to 6 months) has been documented in infants born prematurely.

**Methods of Control**

Educate about good hygiene practices, careful hand washing after toileting, before handling foods and after diapering. Hepatitis A vaccine for travelers, daycare workers and attendees.

**Control of Patient, Contacts and Immediate Environment**

Immune serum globulin for household and intimate contacts. Ill food handlers will be kept out of food handling 2 weeks past jaundice date.

**Treatment Measures**

Supportive, for symptoms