

## CDC: HEPATITIS A

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), hepatitis A is now the most reported preventable infection in the United States. As a result, CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control recommends routine hepatitis A vaccination for all children in the United States.

Hepatitis A is a self-limiting viral form of hepatitis. It is rarely fatal and often asymptomatic. However, when symptoms occur, they can range from a mild flu-like illness to a severely disabling disease that renders the patient unable to work and can require hospitalization.

The hepatitis A virus (HAV) replicates in the liver, is excreted in bile, and is shed in stool. In response to the virus, the immune system produces antibodies that confer lifelong immunity. Hepatitis A virus is transmitted through fecally contaminated food and water or through close personal contact. Concentration of the virus in the blood is low, so transmission by blood or blood products has been rare.

Symptoms include fever, malaise, abdominal discomfort, anorexia, dark urine, nausea, and jaundice. Children under 6 are more likely to be asymptomatic or have mild symptoms. Symptoms usually last less than 2 months, but they can last up to a year. Infection with HAV increases the risk of acute liver failure in people who have chronic liver disease.

### RESOURCES

[HTTP://WWW.CDC.GOV/MMWR/PREVIEW/MMWRHTML/RR5507A1.HTM](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5507a1.htm)

[HTTP://WWW.CDC.GOV/NCIDOD/DISEASES/HEPATITIS/A/FACT.HTM](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/a/fact.htm)

[HTTP://WWW2.NCID.CDC.GOV/TRAVEL](http://www2.ncid.cdc.gov/travel)

The CDC reports that approximately 31% of the United States population has detectable concentrations of antibodies against HAV, but this percentage varies widely by region and ethnicity. The western and southwestern states have historically had the highest rates of hepatitis A.

Hepatitis A has no specific treatment. Prevention includes good hygiene and clean water. Hepatitis A virus can be stable for months on surfaces. Disinfection with a 1:100 dilution of household bleach inactivates the virus. Travelers to developing countries should avoid beverages and ice of unknown purity, raw unpeeled produce, and uncooked shellfish harvested from sewage-contaminated water.

In May 1996 the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved for marketing in the United States a vaccine which prevents HAV. The vaccine is recommended for high-risk groups and children living in communities with high rates of infection. As a result, differences in infection rates

between age, ethnic, and racial groups have narrowed. Regions of the country that historically had the highest incidence of hepatitis A now have the lowest incidence rates, and the national rate of hepatitis A in 2004 was the lowest ever recorded. This most recent recommendation by the CDC will broaden the program to reduce further the prevalence of hepatitis A in the United States.

by *K LaPoint MS*

 Department of Health and Human Services <b>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</b>	
<b>Diseases Related to Travel</b>	
<a href="#">African sleeping sickness (African trypanosomiasis)</a>	> <a href="#">Lyme disease</a>
<a href="#">AIDS/HIV</a>	> <a href="#">Malaria</a>
<a href="#">Altitude illness</a>	> <a href="#">Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR)</a>
<a href="#">Amebiasis</a>	> <a href="#">Meningitis</a>
<a href="#">BSE ("mad cow disease") and nvCJD</a>	> <a href="#">Norovirus infection(Norwalk/Norwalk-like virus infection)</a>
<a href="#">Campylobacter infections</a>	> <a href="#">Onchocerciasis (river blindness)</a>
<a href="#">Chagas' disease (American trypanosomiasis)</a>	> <a href="#">Plague</a>
<a href="#">Filariasis</a>	> <a href="#">Poliomyelitis</a>
<a href="#">Giardiasis (Giardia infection)</a>	> <a href="#">Tuberculosis (TB)</a>
<a href="#">Hantavirus</a>	> <a href="#">Typhoid fever</a>
<a href="#">Head lice (pediculosis)</a>	> <a href="#">Typhus fevers (see rickettsial infections)</a>
<a href="#">Hepatitis</a>	> <a href="#">Varicella (chickenpox)</a>
	> <a href="#">Vibrio parahaemolyticus</a>