

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

## **HEPATITIS A**

### **Accompanying: Hand Washing Fact Sheet**

#### **What is Hepatitis A?**

Hepatitis A (formerly known as infectious hepatitis) is a viral infection that causes liver inflammation. The disease is fairly common; it is caused by the Hepatitis A virus. Anyone can get Hepatitis A, but it occurs more frequently in children.

#### **What are the signs and symptoms of a Hepatitis A infection?**

Symptoms of Hepatitis A may include fatigue, poor appetite, fever, vomiting, pale or clay-colored stool, and darker urine. Jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes) may also occur. Rarely is the disease fatal and recovery normally occurs within a few weeks. Infants and young children tend to have very mild or no symptoms and are less likely to develop jaundice than are older children and adults. Infected persons may have no symptoms.

#### **How are Hepatitis A infections spread?**

The Hepatitis A virus enters through the mouth, multiplies in the body, and is passed in the stool. If careful hand washing with soap is not done, the virus can then be carried on an infected person's hands and spread by direct contact or by consuming food or drink that has been handled by that person. In some cases, it can be spread by consuming water contaminated with improperly treated sewage. The virus is not normally spread to classroom contacts or work associates.

#### **What is the incubation period of Hepatitis A and how long is it contagious?**

Symptoms of Hepatitis A may appear two to six weeks after exposure. The contagious period begins about two weeks before symptoms appear and continues up to one week after onset of jaundice. Once an individual recovers from Hepatitis A, they are immune for life and do not continue to carry the virus.

#### **What should I do if I think I have a Hepatitis A infection?**

There are no medications to treat a person once symptoms appear. Hepatitis A is a reportable disease and must be reported to the Health Department. Children infected with Hepatitis A should be excluded for one week after onset of illness and will need to provide a doctor's note to return to school.

#### **How can I prevent myself and others from getting a Hepatitis A infection?**

Hepatitis A can be prevented with vaccination. Preventive measures include carefully washing hands after using the restroom. Also, infected people should not handle or prepare foods while contagious. Thoroughly sanitize surfaces in all areas, as the Hepatitis A virus can live on surfaces for weeks.

For more information, please contact the Florida Department of Health in Orange County, Epidemiology Program at 407-858-1420. You may also visit the Epidemiology Program website, <http://orange.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/infectious-disease-services/epidemiology/index.html>, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/A/index.htm>, or the OCHD School Health website at <http://orange.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/clinical-and-nutrition-services/school-health/index.html> for additional information.

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