

## How should hands be washed?

- Always use warm, running water and a mild, preferably liquid, soap. It is not essential to use soaps labelled as antiseptic or antibacterial.
- Wet hands and apply a small amount of soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously for 20 seconds. Pay special attention to areas between fingers, finger tips and palms.
- Rinse hands under warm running water and dry thoroughly on a clean dry towel.

## If someone in your household has Hepatitis A:

- The infected person should not prepare food.
- Soiled bedding and clothes should be washed on the hot cycle of your washing machine.
- If you have more than one toilet in your household advise the infected person to only use one and the rest of the household use the other.
- Clean surfaces (toilet seats, flush handles, door handles and taps) at least daily with bleach, diluted as per manufacturer's instructions.
- If cleaning up diarrhoea or vomit, wear rubber gloves; wash the surface with hot soapy water, rinse, and allow to dry. Use paper towels or disposable cloths.
- Dispose of used cloths immediately in a plastic bag.
- The infected person should not share towels/flannels with anyone.

## Useful information

Further advice and information is available from NHS 24:

Freephone: 111  
[www.nhs24.scot](http://www.nhs24.scot)

## Further information and help

For further information please contact your GP.

## We are listening - how did we do?

We welcome your feedback, as it helps us evaluate the services we provide. If you would like to tell us about your experience:

- speak to a member of staff
- visit our website [www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/feedback](http://www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/feedback) or share your story at: [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk) or tel. 0800 122 31 35
- tel. 01851 704704 (ext 2236) Monday-Friday between 10am-4pm.

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### Disclaimer

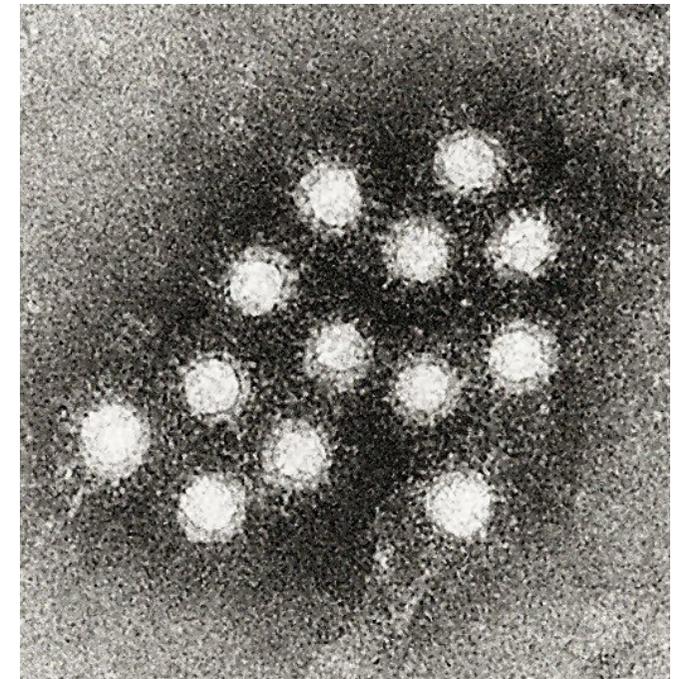
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Bòrd SSN nan Eilean Siar  
NHS Western Isles

# Hepatitis A



Patient information leaflet

## What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis simply means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis can be caused by many things including bacteria, viruses, drugs, drinking too much alcohol, and obesity.

Your illness has been caused by the Hepatitis A virus (HAV). This is also sometimes called 'Infectious Hepatitis'. People who get this virus often become infected during travel to countries where hygiene is poor, or water and sewage services are below standard.

## Is it dangerous?

Hepatitis A is very infectious and can spread from person to person. Transmission within households is very common. Almost everybody recovers completely without special treatment, and with no long-term effects.

Hepatitis A should not be confused with Hepatitis B or C. These can cause a similar illness, but can be much more severe.

## What are the symptoms?

The time between contact with the virus and the start of the first symptoms, the incubation time, varies between 15 and 50 days, but it is usually about 28 days.

Many people who are infected with the Hepatitis A virus have no, or very mild, symptoms. However, the illness can be more severe in elderly people.

Symptoms, which may continue for up to 3 weeks, include:

- fever
- abdominal/stomach pain
- nausea (feeling sick)
- loss of appetite
- jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes).

## How do you catch it?

The Hepatitis A virus is caught by eating or drinking food or water which is contaminated with the virus. The infection can also be spread by close contact with an infected person.

The virus is spread by poor personal or public hygiene. It can be caught where standards of hygiene are low in this country and abroad. There is a higher risk in Africa, Asia, parts of Eastern Europe and parts of the Middle East.

The virus is most likely to be passed to others in the 1 to 2 weeks before, and 1 week after, the symptoms start. Hepatitis A can be spread by:

- swallowing the virus after direct contact with the infected person's faeces, when there is a breakdown in personal or environmental hygiene.
- eating infected food, either food handled by someone with Hepatitis A who has poor hand hygiene, or food washed in contaminated water.
- drinking water contaminated with infected faeces.
- participating in high risk sexual practices.

## Should I see my GP?

The symptoms normally go away without any treatment. Usually children have no symptoms but some adults, particularly the elderly, may have severe illness and need treatment.

People who have been infected with the Hepatitis A virus develop lifelong immunity i.e. you can only catch the virus once. However, as always, if you have any concerns about your illness please consult your GP.

You may be visited by an officer from Environmental Health who will try to find out where the infection may have come from. They will also ask for details about other people in your household, so that they can be offered treatment to prevent them from becoming ill.

## Do I need to stay off work?

If you are infected with the Hepatitis A virus you should remain off work or school until 7 days after the onset of jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes).

## What precautions should I take?

- Fresh fruit and vegetables should be washed before eating and food should always be properly handled and prepared.

More information on food safety is available at [www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/food-safety](http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/food-safety)

- If you are planning to travel to an area of moderate or high risk pre-exposure immunisation may be available.

Check if you need pre-travel immunisations at [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk/home](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk/home)

- Thorough hand washing, taking care to clean between the fingers and the fingertips using liquid soap to decrease the chance of spread to others.

Household members should also not share towels.

You should also wash your hands:

- before handling food/cooking/eating
- after using or cleaning the toilet
- after changing nappies
- after handling contaminated clothing/bedding.