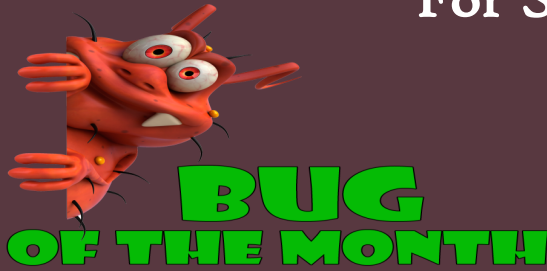


For Staff /Patient Education



Hepatitis A

March 2014

What is it?

- Hepatitis A is caused by infection with the [Hepatitis A virus](#) (HAV), a nonenveloped, positive stranded RNA virus, first identified by electron microscopy in 1973, classified within the genus hepatovirus of the picornavirus family.
- Hepatitis A is a virus that affects your liver.
- Some persons, particularly young children, are asymptomatic. When symptoms are present, they usually occur abruptly and can include the following: fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain, jaundice.
- Symptoms usually last less than 2 months, although 10%–15% of symptomatic persons have prolonged or relapsing disease for up to 6 months.
- The average incubation period for Hepatitis A is 28 days (range: 15–50 days).
- HAV can live outside the body for months, depending on the environmental conditions. The virus is killed by heating to >185 °F (>85 degrees °C) for one minute.

How is it spread?

- [Person-to-person transmission through the fecal-oral route](#) (i.e., ingestion of something that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person) is the primary means of HAV transmission.
- Most infections result from close personal contact with an infected household member or sex partner.
- Because the virus is present in blood during the illness prodrome, HAV has been transmitted on rare occasions by transfusion.
- Although HAV may be present in saliva, transmission by saliva has not been demonstrated.
- Waterborne outbreaks are infrequent and are usually associated with sewage-contaminated or inadequately treated water.

Where is it found?

- Humans are the only natural reservoir of the virus. There are no insect or animal vectors.
- A chronic HAV carrier state has not been reported.

Prevention & Control:

- Vaccination with the full, two-dose series of Hepatitis A vaccine is the best way to prevent HAV infection especially if you are at risk; travelling to other countries, working in an occupation where contact is more likely (day care centers, hospitals), men who have sex with men, injection drug users.
- Good hygiene - including handwashing after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food - is also integral to Hepatitis A prevention, given that the virus is transmitted through the fecal-oral route.
- Avoid contaminated food.
- Practice safer sex.
- Environmental surfaces can be cleaned with a freshly prepared solution of 1:100 dilution of household bleach.
- There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A virus infection. Treatment and management of HAV infection are supportive.



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Source:

CDC DVH-HAV FAQs for Health Professionals (www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/havfaq.htm)



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Concept adapted from Public Health Ontario-Regional Infection Control Network