

## **HEPATITIS A**

Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver. In recent years, childcare settings have been recognized as an important source of hepatitis A epidemics, with spread into the community. Spread occurs most often when diapered children are present.

### **CAUSE:**

Hepatitis A virus

### **SYMPTOMS:**

Onset is usually sudden, fever, loss of appetite, tiredness, nausea. Dark (tea or cola-colored) urine, light-colored stools and jaundice (yellowing of eyes or skin) may appear a few days later. Jaundice occurs more often among adults than children. Symptoms vary greatly, from severe to none at all.

### **SPREAD:**

Hepatitis A viruses leaves the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. Spread can occur when a person does not wash his/her hands after using the toilet or changing diapers and later prepares or eats food. Children may pass the virus to family members or childcare staff without ever having symptoms.

### **INCUBATION:**

It takes 2 to 6 weeks, usually about one month, from the time a person is exposed to the virus until symptoms develop.

### **CONTAGIOUS PERIOD:**

From 2 weeks before to one week after onset of symptoms.

### **REPORTABLE:**

**Provider:** This disease is **reportable** to the local or state health department.

**Parents/guardians:** Inform your childcare provider if your child has this illness.

### **EXCLUSION:**

Consult with your local or state health department. Each situation must be evaluated to determine whether the person with hepatitis A is still infectious and poses a risk to others.

### **PREVENTION/CONTROL:**

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food. **Thorough hand washing is the best way to prevent spread of infectious diseases found in the intestinal tract.** Parents and childcare staff should closely monitor hand washing of all children after they have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
2. Clean and disinfect contaminated area and potty-chair after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, toys at least daily and when soiled.

**Disinfecting Solutions:**

- To disinfect clean, non-food contact surfaces make a solution of household bleach and water. Add 1/4 cup bleach to 1 gallon of water or to make a smaller amount in a spray bottle add 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 quart of water. Saturate area with solution. DO NOT rinse. Air dry.
  - To disinfect mouthed toys or eating utensils: boil, use dishwasher, or soak clean items for 2 minutes in a weak bleach solution. Add 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 gallon of water or 3/4 teaspoon bleach to a quart of water. DO NOT rinse. Air dry. This solution can also be used to disinfect clean kitchen surfaces.
  - **PREPARE SOLUTION FRESH DAILY** because it loses its ability to kill germs with time.
3. If immune globulin (IG) is given to persons exposed to hepatitis A, it should be given within 14 days of exposure. When immune globulin is indicated for childcare staff and attendees, the health department will make appropriate recommendations.
  4. Hepatitis A vaccine: Hepatitis A vaccine is available for any person age 2 years and older. Although hepatitis A vaccine is not routinely recommended for the childcare staff and attendees, if an outbreak occurs in the childcare setting or community, the health department may make specific recommendations for vaccine administration.
  5. Diagnosis: A blood test (Hepatitis A IgM antibody test) is done to determine whether there is recent or current infection.
  6. Treatment: No specific medication is given to persons with hepatitis A.