



Health Corner

Hepatitis A

What is Hepatitis A? Hepatitis A is a virus that affects the liver. It is a common disease that often affects children and young adults. Countries and institutions with poor sanitary conditions have higher episodes of Hepatitis A outbreaks, e.g. prisons, shelters, alcohol rehab centers.

How is it spread? The Hepatitis A virus is found in the stool of an infected person, which is then transmitted via the **fecal-oral route**. Simply put, an infected person spreads the virus through his/her stools.

This is most commonly spread from person-to-person by:

- not properly washing hands after using the bathroom (e.g. preschoolers);
- not properly washing hands before preparing and/or serving food;
- not properly washing hands after changing diapers;
- eating food contaminated with the Hepatitis A virus (e.g. in a restaurant);
- drinking water contaminated with the Hepatitis A virus.

What are symptoms of Hepatitis A? Many infected persons have no symptoms at all. Others may have one or more of the following: tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, fever, jaundice (yellow discoloration of the skin and whites of the eyes), and/or discomfort in the upper abdomen. Symptoms usually last for 1-2 weeks, but can last for months. Persons who have been infected cannot be infected again.

How can Hepatitis A be prevented?

There is no known cure for hepatitis infection, so **prevention is the key!**

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing/serving food.
- Do not share eating tools such as cups, forks and spoons.
- Do not share food or drinks from the same container.
- **Get immunized with the Hepatitis A vaccine.**

For more information, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/index.htm>.

For information in Latvian, go to http://www.emedica.lv/slimibas_hepatits-a.htm.

ISL Policy

- If your child has any of the above symptoms, please consult with your local doctor.
- Encourage your children to wash with soap and water after using the bathroom and before eating.
- If your child is diagnosed with Hepatitis A, please notify the School Nurse immediately. Once symptom-free, your child may then return back to school with a doctor's note.