

Hepatitis E

Patient information and rules of conduct. County Medical Officers' infection prevention sheet.

What is hepatitis E?

Hepatitis E is a virus that can cause inflammation of the liver, and sometimes jaundice as well. There are different forms of hepatitis. In Sweden, the most common form usually produces mild symptoms, while hepatitis E in areas such as Asia, Africa and Latin America can produce more serious symptoms. The infection clears up without treatment, and one generally becomes healthy again.

How is the disease transmitted, and when are carriers infectious?

The virus is found in faeces, and is often spread through ingestion of food or water that has been contaminated. The disease can sometimes be transmitted from person to person, for example through intimate physical contact. The virus is found in some species of animals, such as pigs. So, the virus could be transmitted through contact with animals. Most cases of the disease were contracted abroad. You are infectious from one week before to three weeks after falling ill.

What should you remember so as not to infect others? Rules of conduct and hygiene advice:

- Wash your hands thoroughly after visiting the toilet, before handling foods and before meals.
- Use liquid soap and your own towel or single-use towels.
- Keep the toilet and washbasin clean.
- If children in nappies are carriers of the disease, wash your hands thoroughly after changing their nappies. Keep your changing table very clean. Place used nappies in plastic bags which are then discarded with the rest of your refuse.
- Do not prepare or handle food for others.
- Do not professionally prepare or handle unpackaged foods, or perform work in the healthcare sector while you are infectious.
- Infectious children must stay home from pre-school.
- If you work with unpackaged foods, according to European food legislation you are obliged to notify your supervisor immediately if you are infectious.

Infection with hepatitis E is considered a public health hazard according to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act. You are therefore obliged to follow the rules of conduct given to you by your doctor and to assist with contact tracing which aims to locate the source of the infection or other people who may have been infected.

You may request reassessment of the rules of conduct by the County Medical Officer in your county. You must follow the rules assigned to you before any such assessment is complete.