

Hepatitis A

Patient information. County Medical Officers' infection prevention sheet.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a virus that causes inflammation of the liver, and often jaundice as well. Children in pre-school age can be infected without experiencing noticeable 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 the ingestion of food or water that has been contaminated. The infection can also be transmitted from person to person. Most people have been infected with it abroad.

You are infectious from two weeks before to one week after showing signs of jaundice, however a person can pass on the infection even if they do not exhibit any symptoms.

Following infection with hepatitis A, you have lifelong immunity against the disease.

A person exposed to the infection can be protected through vaccine or gamma globulin if this is administered within two weeks of exposure.

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 food for others, work with 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 A 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.