



## What

Hepatitis A virus (HAV) causes inflammation of the liver and is transmitted through the fecal-oral route, typically through close contact, sexual contact, or consumption of contaminated food or water. Humans are the only known reservoir for the virus. HAV infections are usually self-limited and do not become chronic. Once infected, individuals develop lifelong immunity to the virus.



## Who

Hepatitis A is found worldwide, particularly in areas with poor sanitation. Certain groups are at higher risk of acquiring the virus and experiencing more severe disease, including international travelers, men who have sex with men, intravenous drug users, individuals experiencing homelessness, those with certain medical conditions, and pregnant women.



## Where and when

Hepatitis A infection occurs worldwide, particularly in areas with poor sanitation. Key risk factors for severe disease include being older than 50 years and having underlying liver disease.

## Prevention

Vaccination against hepatitis A is highly effective, safe, and widely available. Preventive hygienic practices include frequent handwashing, avoiding tap water and raw foods in areas with poor sanitation, and ensuring food is properly cooked. In some cases, post-exposure protection may be provided through vaccination or passive immunization with protective antibodies. Current vaccine schedules offer protection for at least 30 years.



## Treatment

Hepatitis A infection is typically self-limiting, with treatment focused on supportive care. Patients are advised to avoid substances harmful to the liver, such as alcohol. In cases of fulminant liver failure, patients should be transferred to a facility capable of performing liver transplantation.

## Symptoms

Hepatitis A typically manifests around 28 days after exposure (with a range of 14 to 49 days). Symptoms are more common in individuals over the age of 5, with 75% of them showing symptoms. The disease often begins suddenly with general malaise, nausea, vomiting, anorexia, fever, abdominal pain, and fatigue. Within a few days to a week, patients may experience dark urine and pale stools. The acute phase generally lasts 1 to 2 weeks.



## In case of infection

Recovery from acute hepatitis A infection can take several months. While 6-10% of individuals may experience recurring liver inflammation, hepatitis A does not progress to a chronic, ongoing infection. Once recovered, individuals typically have lifelong immunity to the virus.