

## Hepatitis A

**What is hepatitis A?** It is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. It can last from one week to several months with:

- No symptoms at all, especially in young children –OR
- Jaundice or yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes Abdominal pain, nausea, loss of appetite
- Dark urine and pale-colored stools
- Low-grade fever, fatigue

**How does hepatitis A spread?** It spreads by:

- Touching stool when diapering and toileting
- Not washing hands before handling food
- Not cleaning and disinfecting toys and diapering, toileting and hand-washing areas Playing in wading pools and water-play tables
- Drinking contaminated water and eating shellfish in areas with inadequate sewage treatment

**When is hepatitis A contagious?**

- From two weeks *before* until one week *after* the start of jaundice.
- After exposure to hepatitis A, it can take two to eight weeks (typically four weeks) to get sick.

**How do I know if my child has hepatitis A?** If anyone in the family has symptoms, see your doctor immediately. Hepatitis A is diagnosed by special blood tests.

What should I do if my child has hepatitis A?

**Treatment:** Follow your doctor's recommendations:

- Help your child recover by encouraging rest, food, and plenty of liquids to drink.

*If children or adults at home or school were exposed to hepatitis A within the previous two weeks and haven't gotten sick yet, they can get a special injection to prevent them from getting sick or make their illness milder.*

**Keep your child home:** until one week after the start of jaundice and until the child feels well enough to participate in activities. *Notify your Head Start program immediately.*

**To limit the spread:**

- Report the illness to the local health department.
- Ask your doctor about getting hepatitis A vaccine.
- Wash hands after diapering and toileting and before handling food.
- Clean and disinfect diapering areas, mouthed toys, and dining tables after each use; clean and disinfect toileting areas and hand-washing sinks daily.
- Use sprinklers instead of wading pools. Use individual water-play basins instead of water-play tables.