Hepatitis A, patient information

Why have I received this information?

Tests have shown that you have hepatitis A.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is caused by a virus that causes inflammation of the liver. Symptoms include fever, nausea, vomiting and tiredness. In most cases, adults also experience yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes. Children of pre-school age can be infected without showing any symptoms of the disease, but they are still infectious. The infection resolves on its own without treatment. The time from becoming infected to the onset of symptoms (incubation period) is 2–6 weeks.

Those who have had hepatitis A once have lifelong protection against the disease, and two doses of vaccination against hepatitis A gives protection for at least 25 years.

A person who has been exposed to infection can receive a vaccine or immunoglobulins, which can provide some protection against infection if given within two weeks of exposure.

How is hepatitis A transmitted?

The virus is found in the stools, and is usually spread through contaminated food and water. The infection can also spread from person to person. Most people are infected abroad, but in Sweden there have been outbreaks via food and in pre-schools.

How long am I infectious?

You are infectious from two weeks before the onset of your symptoms until one week after your skin and the whites of your eyes turned yellow. People who have hepatitis A but do not have symptoms are also infectious. In such cases, your doctor will inform you how long you will be infectious.

What should I keep in mind so I do not infect others?

Hepatitis A is classified as a disease that represents a danger to public health under the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act. You must therefore follow certain rules given to you by your doctor, known as the ‘rules of conduct’. Guardians are responsible for ensuring that children comply with the rules of conduct.

Rules of conduct:

- You should not work with unpackaged food or work in healthcare and social care.
- Children should not attend pre-school.
- You should wash your hands thoroughly after using the toilet and before meals.
- You should use liquid soap and your own hand towel or a disposable towel.

If you have been issued with rules of conduct that you believe to be wrong, you can contact the county medical officer for your region.

To protect others from infection, the following points also apply:

- You should clean the toilet seat and sink thoroughly after use.
- If a child in diapers is a carrier, you should wash your hands thoroughly after changing diapers and clean the changing table thoroughly. Used diapers should be packed in a plastic bag and disposed of as household waste.
- You should not cook or handle food for others.

If you work with unpackaged food, European food legislation requires you to inform your employer of your infection as soon as possible.

How long do these rules of conduct apply?

The rules of conduct apply for as long as you are infectious. Your doctor will tell you how long you will be infectious.

Contact tracing

According to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act, you must participate in contact tracing. This means that you must provide information to healthcare professionals so they can assess when, where and how you may have been infected, and whether you may have infected others.

The information you provide is confidential (secret) and the people you name will not know who you are.

More information

Hepatitis A | 1177 (1177.se)

About the infection prevention sheet

The infection prevention sheet is valid nationally, and has been produced by the Swedish Association of County Medical Officers and the Swedish Association of Infection Prevention and Control Nurses.