Hepatitis A: What You Need to Know

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable, liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). The virus is one of several types of hepatitis that cause liver inflammation (swelling) and affect your liver’s ability to function.

Basic Facts

- Very rare
- Fewer than 20,000 US cases per year
- Treatable by a medical professional
- Requires a medical diagnosis
- Lab tests or imaging always required
- Spreads through contaminated food or water
- Short-term: resolves within days to weeks

Hepatitis A can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine.

Source: cdc.gov
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How it Spreads
Hepatitis A spreads by eating or drinking contaminated food or water, or by having contact with someone who is infected. Hepatitis A is very contagious, and often spreads before an infected person knows they’re sick.

Symptoms
- Yellow skin or eyes
- Not wanting to eat
- Upset stomach
- Throwing up
- Stomach pain
- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Joint pain
- Feeling tired
- Dark urine/light-colored stools

Diagnosis & Treatment
A doctor will discuss your symptoms and take a blood sample. To treat the symptoms of hepatitis A, doctors usually recommend rest, good nutrition, and drinking clear fluids to prevent dehydration.

Prevention
The best way to prevent hepatitis A is vaccination. The key to preventing the spread of hepatitis A is good hygiene, especially frequent hand-washing.

Source: cdc.gov