

THE FACTS ON HEPATITIS

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Major outbreaks of hepatitis A involving food handlers are all too common. The easiest way to prevent the spread of this disease is for you to remember to carefully wash your hands after using the toilet. If you are not feeling well, tell your boss, stay home from work and see your doctor. Not only will this protect against the spread of hepatitis A, it will also help prevent the spread of other infections.

State of Florida
Department of
Business and Professional
Regulation

Division of
Hotels and Restaurants
Hospitality Education
Program

www.hospitalityeducation.org



What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by a virus.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include fatigue, poor appetite, fever and vomiting. Urine may become dark and the whites of a person's eyes or their skin may become yellowed—a condition known as jaundice.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms most commonly appear within three to four weeks after exposure, although symptoms can appear as early as two weeks and as late as six weeks after exposure.

How long can an infected person spread the virus?

A person spreads the virus as much as a week prior to showing any symptoms and will continue to spread the virus up to the time of jaundice.

How is the virus spread?

The virus enters through the mouth, multiplies in the body and is passed in the feces (bowel movements). The virus can be carried on an infected person's hands and be spread by direct contact or consuming food or drink handled by that person.

How can hepatitis A be prevented?

The most effective way to prevent the disease is careful handwashing *every time* after using the toilet.

How can I reduce the risk of spreading hepatitis A?

Carefully wash your hands after using the toilet. People working with ready-to-serve foods such as salads, fruits and sandwiches or those who slice meats should wear disposable plastic gloves. If you feel ill, don't go to work. Tell your boss and see your doctor.

How is hepatitis A treated?

Persons suspected of having hepatitis A can get confirmation of the virus only through blood tests. The recommended treatment for exposure to hepatitis A is immune globulin injections administered intramuscularly. Also, a recently developed vaccine is now available to protect against hepatitis A.