

You need two vaccinations, for best protection. There is also a combined hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine.

Talk to your doctor if you are thinking about hepatitis A vaccination.

### Safer sex practices

Use dams to prevent spreading hepatitis A during oral-anal sex. You can get them at sexual health clinics and some chemists.

### Overseas travel

If you are travelling to places where hepatitis A is common (including most developing countries), take special care to avoid infections. Be very careful when you choose or prepare food and drink.

**'Cook it, peel it, boil it or forget it'** is good advice.

See your doctor and discuss your travel plans **at least six weeks** in advance. Vaccination against hepatitis A is often a good idea.

### For more information contact

#### Your GP or a doctor of your choice

#### Sexual Health Helpline

9227 6178 or 1800 198 205 free call from landlines and some mobiles

#### Regional population health units

(Those in bold provide clinical services)

Albany	9842 7500
Broome	9194 1630
Bunbury	9781 2350
Carnarvon	9941 0500
<b>Geraldton</b>	<b>9956 1980</b>
Kalgoorlie-Boulder	9080 8200
Northam	9622 4320
<b>South Hedland</b>	<b>9174 1660</b>

#### You can find more information about hepatitis on the internet:

[www.healthywa.wa.gov.au](http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au)

Front cover image courtesy of Centres for Disease Control



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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Government of Western Australia  
Department of Health  
Public and Aboriginal Health Division

# Your sexual health Hepatitis A



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## What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a viral infection that causes inflammation of the liver.

## Signs and symptoms

Symptoms usually appear about four weeks after you've been infected. Common symptoms include:

- tiredness
- body aches and pains
- loss of appetite
- feeling sick and vomiting
- fever and chills
- upper stomach pain, usually on the right side
- eyes or skin turning yellow (jaundice).

Young children often have no symptoms, but most older children and adults do.

The symptoms usually last for a few weeks, but the tiredness can last longer.

**If you or your child develops these symptoms, see your doctor for a blood test.**

Deaths from hepatitis A are rare, but some people get very sick.

## How is it spread?

The hepatitis A virus is found in the faeces of infected people. It's usually spread by close personal contact (including sexual contact) with an infected person, or by eating or drinking contaminated (dirty) food or water.

People at most risk are:

- people who live with someone who has hepatitis A
- people with poor hygiene, especially poor hand washing
- people in jobs where they may be exposed to the virus, including child care and sewage workers
- people travelling to other countries where hepatitis A is common.
- people who practice oral-anal sex.

Young children have very close contact with each other, so it's easy for the virus to spread between children, particularly if they're still in nappies.

## Treatment

Talk to your doctor. There is no special treatment for hepatitis A. Most people get well on their own after a few months, but a few older children and adults may need to go to hospital. Lots of rest and a good diet help.

You can't get hepatitis A more than once.

## Can I still go to work?

People who handle food or drink professionally, child care and health care workers and swimming instructors must not go to work for at least one week after jaundice develops. Check with your doctor.

## Protecting yourself

If you have had close contact with an infected person, see your doctor as soon as possible, as there are ways to prevent or lessen the severity of the infection.

## Hand washing and hygiene

Always wash your hands (use soap, and rub hands together really well for 15 seconds):

- after going to the toilet
- after changing nappies
- before eating
- before preparing food.

The hepatitis A virus can survive in moist places for weeks. If you or a family member has hepatitis A, you need to clean all surfaces which could have the virus on it for at least one week after jaundice develops. This includes door handles, toilet seats and handles, taps and nappy change tables.

If you have hepatitis A, don't prepare or handle other people's food.

## Vaccination

There is a hepatitis A vaccine. It is recommended for:

- Aboriginal children in Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and South Australia.
- people travelling to places where hepatitis A is common (includes most developing countries)
- people living or working in remote Aboriginal communities
- staff in child care centres
- sewage workers
- sex workers
- the intellectually disabled and their carers
- men who have sex with men
- people who inject drugs
- people with chronic liver disease.