



FOODBORNE ILLNESS EDUCATION SERIES

HEPATITIS A

Hepatitis A virus is one of the “Big Six” foodborne pathogens that is highly infectious and can cause severe foodborne illness. Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. Although there are several types of hepatitis, hepatitis A is a very contagious foodborne pathogen that is caused by the hepatitis A virus. It is estimated that there are 24,900 new cases of hepatitis A in the U.S. each year. It is most frequently acquired from ingestion of food or water that was contaminated with the hepatitis A virus and through close physical contact with persons infected with the virus.

TRANSMISSION, SYMPTOMS, AND STATISTICS

- Hepatitis A is carried in the feces of infected persons and is most commonly spread when an infected person does not properly wash their hands after using the restroom and then touches food, a surface, or a person’s mouth.
- The incubation period ranges from 14 to 50 days, with the 14 days before symptoms appear being the most contagious.
- Symptoms develop abruptly and include fever, feeling run down, lack of appetite, nausea, vomiting, pain on the right side of the abdomen, dark urine, light-colored stools, jaundice (yellow eyes and skin), and itchy skin. Severity of symptoms depends on age. Infected children under the age of 6 may not display any symptoms. Hepatitis A can result in death.
- The illness usually lasts for up to 2 months, but symptoms can last for up to 6 months.
- Once a person becomes infected with hepatitis A, it is not possible for them to become infected again.
- Do not allow employees to work when they are ill with vomiting, diarrhea, or jaundice. Employees diagnosed with *Salmonella* of any kind, *Shigella*, Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*, hepatitis A, or norovirus should also be excluded.



ABOUT HEPATITIS A

Hepatitis A is a common cause of foodborne infection. Unlike other foodborne infections, there is a vaccine available.

Fruits, vegetables, shellfish, ice, and water are the foods that are most likely to be contaminated by the hepatitis A virus.

Hepatitis A has been responsible for numerous recalls of food products

Hepatitis A can persist for months in an environment.



TRANSMISSION, SYMPTOMS, AND STATISTICS

- Immediately exclude employees displaying symptoms of jaundice if the jaundice developed within the last 7 days.
 - Contact your corporate office to inform them of any employee who is displaying symptoms of jaundice.
 - Follow-up on all customer claims of foodborne illness, and properly communicate any outbreak information to the local or state public health agency.
 - Contact your local public health agency to report the jaundiced employee and for advice on other actions.
- Train all employees in proper handwashing techniques. Monitor to ensure proper execution.
 - Strictly enforce no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods within the food establishment.
 - Use only approved food suppliers and distributors that can verify they monitor produce growers for Good Agricultural Practices. Purchase only from food processors that have Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and trace-back capabilities and have third-party audits to confirm they are in compliance with all federal and local regulations.

5 MUST-KNOW FACTS FOR LOCATION EMPLOYEES

1

Wash hands thoroughly, especially after using the restroom. Pay special attention to scrubbing under fingernails, between fingers, and around wrists.

2

Do not work while sick with vomiting, diarrhea, or fever with sore throat. Inform your manager immediately if you are diagnosed with hepatitis A.

3

Wash raw vegetables and produce under running water or with a produce wash according to the label directions before preparing or eating.

4

Wash hands, knives, cutting boards, and other food-contact areas after handling uncooked food, including produce and raw meat, fish and seafood, or poultry.

5

Thoroughly cook food to safe minimum internal temperatures: produce to 135°F/57°C; eggs for immediate service to 145°F/63°C or 155°F/68°C if not for immediate service; seafood, beef and pork to 145°F/63°C; rare steaks to 145°F/63°C on the surfaces with a color change at the surface, poultry to 165°F/74°C; and ground meats/injected steaks to 155°F/68°C.