



PUBLIC HEALTH
Environmental Health Services

Hepatitis A and Food Handlers

Fact Sheet

Food handlers play a critical role in food safety. If a food handler works while ill, he/she puts co-workers and customers at risk of getting sick. Hepatitis A is a highly contagious, but preventable virus of which all food handlers need to be aware.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious virus that causes a liver infection.

How does hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A typically spreads by consuming fecal matter of an infected person from contact with objects, food or drinks. The virus can remain infectious after one month on surfaces. One infected food handler can transmit the virus to hundreds of people.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Some people do not show any symptoms. However, if symptoms develop, they usually appear several weeks after infection and can include:

- Yellow skin or eyes
- Loss of appetite
- Stomach pain
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Dark urine
- Diarrhea
- Joint pain
- Fatigue
- Light-colored stools

Talk with your healthcare provider if you are experiencing any of the symptoms listed above.

How can food handlers protect themselves and the public from hepatitis A?

Food handlers can protect themselves against hepatitis A by getting vaccinated. Protect the public by training staff in the following good hygiene practices:

- Limit bare hand contact by wearing gloves or using utensils when preparing food.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water before preparing food and after changing tasks.
- Refrain from working while experiencing fever, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Seek medical attention for post-exposure prophylaxis if contact was made with an infected person.

If an employee has been diagnosed with hepatitis A:

- Exclude him/her from the food facility.
- Notify anyone that has had contact with the infected employee.
- Contact Environmental Health Services (EHS) at 800-442-2283.

For more information on hepatitis A, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm>.



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