

FACT SHEET

HEPATITIS A

(Hepatitis A Virus, HAV)

<i>What is Hepatitis A?</i>	Hepatitis is an irritation of the liver caused by a virus. There are different types of hepatitis and they spread in different ways.
<i>How is it spread?</i>	HAV infects the digestive tract and is passed in feces. It is transmitted from person-to-person by putting something in the mouth (even though it may look clean) that has been contaminated with feces of a person with Hepatitis A. Contaminated food and water can also spread the disease.
<i>What is the incubation period?</i>	It can take 15-50 days after exposure for symptoms to appear.
<i>What are the early signs?</i>	Signs of the disease start suddenly and last about a week: low-grade fever, loss of appetite, abdominal discomfort, nausea, and fatigue. Within a few days, the skin and the whites of the eyes may begin to appear yellowish (jaundice). Children often have a milder form of the disease and may have few or none of the above symptoms.
<i>What about contacts?</i>	Children are excluded from school only with the first signs of illness. Household members and <i>close</i> contacts (kissing, sharing food) should contact their physician.
<i>How long is the person contagious?</i>	Hepatitis A is most contagious in the 2 weeks before symptoms appear, and it is minimally contagious a week after the onset of jaundice.
<i>When is it OK to return to childcare/school?</i>	Children may return to school when recovered (at least 7 days after jaundice started), and with physician approval.
<i>Other Important Information</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good handwashing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of Hepatitis A. Always wash well after using the bathroom and before preparing or eating food. ▪ The local health department is required to investigate all Hepatitis A cases. ▪ A vaccine against Hepatitis A is available. Contact your physician or local health department.

This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, you may contact a Kalamazoo County nurse at 373-5264 or 373-5267.