

Michigan Hepatitis A Outbreak Information for First Responders

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable, liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. Mild cases can last a few weeks while severe cases can last several months and can cause death.

How is hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A spreads by putting something in your mouth (object, food, or drink) that has been in contact with the feces of an infected person. Hepatitis A can be spread:

- When an individual does not wash their hands after contact with infected stool (e.g., after using the bathroom or changing diapers)
- By having sexual contact or living with an infected partner
- By consuming food or drinks that are contaminated by the virus

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Not everyone shows symptoms. If symptoms develop, they usually appear 15-50 days after infection and can include:

- Fever
- Feeling tired
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Dark urine
- Grey stool
- Joint pain
- Yellowing of the skin and eyes

Who is at risk of getting hepatitis A?

Anyone can get hepatitis A, however, these groups are at the highest risk:

- Homeless
- Incarcerated
- Injection and non-injection illegal drug users
- People who have close contact, care for, or live with someone who has hepatitis A
- People who have sexual activities with someone who has hepatitis A
- Men who have sex with men
- People with chronic liver disease, such as cirrhosis, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C
- People who work with the high risk populations listed above
- Healthcare workers
- Food handlers

How is hepatitis A treated?

Treatment includes rest, good nutrition, fluids, and medical monitoring. Severe cases may need to be hospitalized. Most people who get hepatitis A recover completely and don't have lasting liver damage. It's important to see a doctor if you have symptoms of hepatitis A.



How can first responders protect themselves from infection?

Use simple precautions such as washing hands after having contact with another individual and before touching or consuming food and beverages. Wear gloves according to standard contact precautions. For responders who work with individuals at risk for hepatitis A infection, vaccination can provide additional protection.

For more information

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has developed a special website for the hepatitis A outbreak. Visit the MDHHS hepatitis A outbreak website to learn more about how to protect yourselves. The website is: michigan.gov/hepatitisaoutbreak