

Hepatitis A Information for Contacts of Cases



Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease that results from infection with the hepatitis A virus. The virus is found in the stool of people with the infection and is usually spread by consuming food or water contaminated with the virus.

A contact of a case is defined as:

- All unvaccinated household members
- All unvaccinated sexual contacts
- Anyone sharing illicit drugs with a case
- Anyone sharing food or eating or drinking utensils with a case
- Anyone consuming ready-to-eat foods prepared by an infectious food handler

Recommendations for contacts of cases:

1. Contact your healthcare provider about the possibility of receiving hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG), which may provide some protection against the disease, if administered within two weeks after exposure
2. Monitor your health for symptoms of hepatitis A infection up to 50 days after exposure
3. Wash your hands with soap and warm water frequently and thoroughly, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing food
4. If symptoms of hepatitis A infection develop, stay at home and contact your healthcare provider immediately

Contacts of cases who are not ill may continue their regular activities (work, school, and social) without restriction.

Testing of individuals who do not have symptoms of hepatitis A is not recommended, with the exception of food handlers (persons who directly prepare, serve, or handle food) in the food service industry. Hawaii State law requires contacts of cases, if not vaccinated prior to exposure, be tested and have a negative hepatitis A IgM test before returning to work. If you are a food handler, please contact your healthcare provider to request this test or, if applicable, provide documentation to your employer of your hepatitis A vaccinations administered prior to exposure. Note: Hepatitis A vaccine or IG, if indicated, should be administered after test results are received.

Symptoms of hepatitis A infection:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Headache and/or body ache
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Stomach pain
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Dark colored urine
- Pale colored stools
- Yellow skin and eyes (Jaundice—may develop several days to a week after other symptoms begin)

For more information about hepatitis A, visit www.health.hawaii.gov.