

Hepatitis A: Men who have Sex with Men

In Los Angeles County, there has been an increase in hepatitis A cases among men who have sex with men (MSM). This information can help you take steps to prevent the spread of hepatitis A and help protect yourself from infection.

1. What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious (spreads person to person) virus (germ) that can cause liver disease. Hepatitis A spreads by putting something in your mouth (object, food, or drink) that has been in contact with the feces (poop) of an infected person. This includes sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis A. Illness in mild cases can last a few weeks while severe cases can last several months.

2. Am I at-risk of getting hepatitis A?

Anyone can get hepatitis A. However, men who have sex with men are at-risk. People with a weakened immune system, like people with HIV, are at a higher risk of developing a severe illness from hepatitis A. Other people at-risk for getting hepatitis A include those who:

- Travel or live in countries where hepatitis A is common
- Live with someone with hepatitis A
- Use recreational drugs
- Have sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis A
- Are homeless

3. How can you prevent hepatitis A?

The best protection against hepatitis A is getting vaccinated. The shot is safe, even for people with HIV, and it is very effective. It is very important that people with a weakened immune system, like people with HIV, get vaccinated to protect themselves from hepatitis A. Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before, after and between sex, before eating or preparing food, and after using the bathroom can also help prevent getting hepatitis A.

4. What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Grey stool (poop)
- Feeling tired
- Stomach pain
- Yellowing of the skin and eyes
- Loss of appetite
- Dark urine (pee)
- Nausea
- Jaundice

5. How is hepatitis A treated?

Treatment includes rest, good nutrition, fluids, and medical monitoring. Some people may need to be hospitalized. Most healthy people recover completely and don't have lasting liver damage. It is especially important for those with weakened immune systems to see their doctor right away if they have symptoms of hepatitis A.



Key messages:

- Hepatitis A is highly contagious (spreads person-to-person).
- Getting vaccinated is the best protection against hepatitis A.
- Protect yourself by washing your hands with water and soap for at least 20 seconds.

For more information:

Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health
<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/Diseases/HepA.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/populations/msm.htm>

Hepatitis A Vaccine
Dial 2-1-1 or visit
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov

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