

## *HEPATITIS A IN DAY CARE*

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### **What is hepatitis A?**

Hepatitis A is an infection of a person's liver which is caused by a virus.

### **What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?**

The illness usually includes a sudden fever, nausea, vomiting, a general tired or weak feeling, dark-colored urine and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of eyes). These symptoms begin about two to six weeks after contact with the virus.

### **How is hepatitis A diagnosed?**

The diagnosis of hepatitis A is made by a doctor based on the person's symptoms and on blood tests. An infected person with no symptoms will still show signs of the hepatitis A infection in his or her blood.

### **How is the hepatitis A virus spread in a day care center?**

Persons become infected by getting hepatitis A virus into their mouths. Hepatitis A virus is found in the bowel movement (stool) of an infected person. Children with hepatitis A who have no symptoms still have the virus in their stool. The virus can be spread by direct contact with the stool of any infected person (whether or not they have symptoms), by diaper changing, or by contact with stool-contaminated food, toys, and other objects.

Spread of hepatitis A commonly occurs at day care centers and among families of children who attend day care centers. **If persons with hepatitis A are found in a day care center, the center should not close and parents should not transfer their children to other centers or homes.** Transferring children only helps spread the disease to other centers.

### **How long can an infected person spread the virus?**

Infected persons can spread the virus for one to two weeks before becoming jaundiced and one to two weeks after jaundice develops.

### **What is the treatment for hepatitis A?**

There is no treatment for hepatitis A once a person becomes ill. Immune globulin (IG or gamma globulin) is a shot given to prevent hepatitis. It is most useful if given within the two weeks after contact with a person who has hepatitis A. IG will not prevent the disease if given just before symptoms develop. IG provides temporary protection for approximately three months.

## **How can the spread of hepatitis A be stopped in a day care?**

Good hygiene at the day care center and at home is important to stop the spread of hepatitis A. This includes:

1. Washing hands carefully with soap after each bowel movement.
2. Teaching children to wash their hands with soap and warm water every time after using the toilet.
3. Washing hands carefully after changing diapers or handling any stool-soiled material.
4. Careful disposal of used paper diapers and careful handling and washing of stool-soiled cloth diapers.
5. Persons changing or handling stool-soiled diapers and cleaning bathrooms should not also prepare or handle food.
6. Always wash hands carefully before preparing or handling any food.

Workers in the day care may want to seriously consider being immunized against hepatitis A.

## **Where can I get more information?**

- Your doctor
- Your local health department, listed in your telephone directory
- The Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191

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