

# Fact Sheet

## Hepatitis A

An increase in the number of notifications of hepatitis A has been reported in New South Wales amongst men who have sex with men (MSM). It is suspected that these infections are associated with a recent outbreak overseas amongst MSM in Europe and the Americas. Hepatitis A is a vaccine preventable infection; MSM are advised to speak to their healthcare provider about vaccination.

### What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a viral infection that causes inflammation of the liver. People who contract hepatitis A are likely to have symptoms lasting 1 to 2 weeks, or in severe cases, several months.

### Transmission

Transmission of hepatitis A occurs when traces of faeces (containing hepatitis A virus) contaminate hands, objects, water or food and the virus is then taken in by mouth (faecal-oral route). Hepatitis A can also be acquired through sexual contact, especially oral-anal sex (rimming). Fingers, hands, penises or objects that come into contact with the anus and then the mouth could also provide a route of transmission. Hepatitis A is extremely durable in the environment.

### Symptoms

Symptoms may include abdominal pain, loss of appetite, weight loss, nausea (and sometimes vomiting), fever and chills, mild headache, tiredness, yellow skin and eyes (jaundice), dark urine and pale faeces. Symptoms can take 2 - 7 weeks to appear, but usually occur within 4 weeks.

### Prevention

- > Vaccination is the most effective form of prevention against hepatitis A infection.
- > Follow good personal hygiene practices, especially thorough hand washing and safe sexual practices.
- > People with hepatitis A are excluded from work for 7 days after the onset of jaundice (if present) or 2 weeks from the onset of illness.

### Vaccination

The hepatitis A vaccine provides protection within 4 weeks of having the vaccine and lasts for more than 10 years, if a booster dose is administered at least 6 months after the first dose.

There is a combination vaccine that provides protection for both hepatitis A and hepatitis B.

To receive the vaccine, contact your health care provider to arrange an appointment.

### For more information

- > SA Health - You've Got What?: [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/YouveGotWhat#H](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/YouveGotWhat#H)
- > SA Health - Immunisation: [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation)
- > SAMESH: [www.samesh.org.au/hepatitis-a.html](http://www.samesh.org.au/hepatitis-a.html)
- > SHINE SA: <https://www.shinesa.org.au/health-information/sexually-transmitted-infections/hepatitis-a/>
- > Hepatitis SA: <https://hepatitissa.asn.au/about-hepatitis/hepatitis-a>

**Communicable Disease Control Branch**  
**Telephone: 1300 232 272**  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)

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