



What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. It is spread if feces contaminate food, water, objects, and surfaces, or through close person-to-person contact. A vaccine can prevent hepatitis A. Since 2017 there have been multiple outbreaks of hepatitis A in the United States. These outbreaks are primarily due to person-to-person contact rather than contaminated food or water.

Symptoms of hepatitis A

Most adults with hepatitis A have symptoms but younger children often do not. If symptoms occur, they usually appear two to seven weeks after exposure and can include:

- Yellow skin or eyes (possible jaundice)
- Not wanting to eat or nausea
- Stomach pain
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Dark urine or light-colored stools
- Diarrhea
- Feeling extremely tired

People who get hepatitis A may feel sick for a few weeks to several months but usually recover completely. Rarely hepatitis A can cause liver failure or death, particularly in older people and in people with other serious health issues, such as chronic liver disease from alcohol or another hepatitis.

Preventing the spread of hepatitis A

Food workers and volunteers at sites where meals are provided should follow these recommendations:

- Check in daily and be excluded from food prep or cleaning activities if they (or anyone in their household) have fever, jaundice, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
 - Before letting ill food workers or volunteers return to work, please contact the Spokane Regional Health District.
- Wash hands before putting on gloves and each time gloves are changed. Change gloves for each new task and when gloves are contaminated.
- Avoid self-serve buffet style service.
- Avoid putting out self-service food items, such as drink pitchers, coffee dispensers, butter/margarine, salt and pepper shakers, sweets, and condiments.
- Use disposable trays and eating utensils, if possible.
- Use a chlorine based sanitizer on all surfaces before and after each meal period. Read the label to make sure it is effective against hepatitis A and it is being used correctly.
- Check if you have ever had a dose of hepatitis A vaccine by contacting your healthcare provider or visiting <https://wa.myir.net/register/>. If you are not protected, please consider getting a hepatitis A vaccine through your healthcare provider or pharmacy. Check the srhd.org website for immunization clinics or call 509.324.1611.

Proper hand washing is essential to prevent the spread of illness.

- Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Turn off the faucet using a paper towel.
- Dry hands using a paper towel or air dryer.
- If exiting a restroom, use a paper towel to open the door.

What should I do if a food worker or volunteer is ill?

- Do not let ill staff or volunteers work. Contact Spokane Regional Health District's Environmental Public Health Division at 509.324.1560 ext. 2 to report illnesses as soon as possible. After normal business hours or on weekends, call 509.324.1500 to reach someone who can assist you.
- Food workers or volunteers with jaundice, fever, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea must be excluded from food prep or cleaning until seven days after the first day of jaundice or at least 72 hours after symptoms stop, whichever is longer.

How do I clean and disinfect affected areas when hepatitis A is active in the community?

- Workers should not have had nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach pains for at least 72 hours before reporting to the cleaning crew.
- If a member of the cleaning crew is a food worker and becomes ill as a result of working on the cleanup crew, the food worker must be immediately excluded and the facility **MUST BE** re-cleaned.
- Workers assigned to facility cleaning should immediately wash hands and put gloves on upon entering the establishment.
- Be sure the cleaning crew uses personal protective equipment, including safety glasses, if handling strong bleach solutions, single use gloves, respirators, and disposable chemical resistant aprons.

General cleaning guidelines for kitchen and food preparation surfaces: clean surfaces with a detergent solution; **rinse** with clean water; **disinfect** with a solution of one cup bleach per gallon of water; let sit for one minute and let air dry. Follow with a standard wash, rinse and sanitize (50-200 ppm residual chlorine) procedure for all kitchen surfaces and utensils.

Clean, rinse and disinfect with a one cup bleach to one gallon of water solution on all non-food contact surfaces that are commonly touched by food workers, volunteers or guests each day, including:

- Tables, chairs and chair backs, hand rails, doors and knobs, counters, shelves, light switches, elevator buttons, equipment faces, telephones, surfaces of computer components (unplug before cleaning), and all other exposed surfaces.
- Restroom surfaces, bath rails, handrails, etc. Empty cabinets or shelves before cleaning.

Clean, rinse and disinfect all of the surfaces listed below on a regular basis each day using 50-200 ppm residual chlorine:

- Food prep equipment and ice machine interiors. This includes washing the insides of ice storage bins, refrigerators, and microwave ovens. Empty shelves before cleaning.
- Walls and non-carpeted floors.
- Carpeting, upholstery, and mats should be steam cleaned when contaminated.
- Sheets and towels should be laundered offsite between uses with chlorine bleach for fabrics that can tolerate bleach. Machine dry with heat at the maximum level the material can tolerate.

Have a clean up plan for vomiting and diarrheal events.

- For more information please contact SRHD at 509.324.1560 ext. 2

Closing a food facility may be necessary to prevent further spread of illness and to allow adequate time to clean and disinfect the facility.