



City of Albuquerque Environmental Health Department



What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. Hepatitis A infection can cause fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, dark urine, and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice). Symptoms usually start within 2 weeks after being exposed to the virus and last less than 2 months.

How is hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A spreads person to person through direct contact. Direct contact can include, caring for someone who has Hepatitis A or consuming contaminated food or drink that has been handled by someone who is infected with the virus.

Most infections in the U.S. are from contact with a household member or through close personal contact with a person who has hepatitis A (e.g., sharing towels, cigarettes, toothbrushes or eating utensils; having sex with someone who is infected; or through IV drug use).

How is hepatitis A treated or prevented?

The best way to prevent hepatitis A is through vaccination with the hepatitis A vaccine. Thoroughly washing hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food is also important to prevent the spread of hepatitis A.

How can you reduce the chance of hepatitis A being spread in your food establishment?

Ensure your employees know to report any symptoms of this illness to you. Send the employee home right away and have them follow up with their doctor immediately. The employee may also visit a public health office for free or low cost care and/or vaccination. Inform your employees that they need to tell you right away if a household member has been diagnosed with hepatitis A. Many people, especially children, have no symptoms and, therefore, they can spread the virus to others.

The Environmental Health Department with the assistance of the New Mexico Department of Health will inform you when your employee may return to work.

If there is a concern for hepatitis A transmission to customers from your facility, especially if food safety procedures are not followed by food workers, customers will be informed of their exposure to the virus and what they can do get vaccinated.

For more information on hepatitis A, including information about this current outbreak in our area, please visit the New Mexico Department of Health, Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Program at : <https://nmhealth.org/about/phd/idb/hip/> or, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/2017March-HepatitisA.htm>