

Clinician: _____

Definition: Inflammation of the liver caused by Hepatitis A virus (see general information sheet on hepatitis).

The Hepatitis A virus is the most common cause of Hepatitis in the world, and commonly occurs in young adults. It is spread from person to person by the fecal-oral route: that is, coming in contact with contaminated food, water, hands, toilets, dishes, etc., of the infected person and eventually ingesting the fecal contaminant. Therefore, people sharing food, kitchen, or bathroom facilities with someone who has Hepatitis A can get infected. Hepatitis A is common in developing countries.

Incubation Period: From 15-50 days with an average of 28-30 days.

Period of communicability- Maximum infectivity is during the latter half of the incubation period, continuing for a few days after the onset of jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of eyes). Most cases are non-infectious after the first week of jaundice.

NOTE: Not everyone exposed to Hepatitis A virus gets the disease. Also, many cases are subclinical (not sick enough to seek medical care) or are anicteric (without yellow indices).

Illness caused by Hepatitis: Usually lasts between 0 (subclinical cases) to 12 weeks with an average course of 2-8 weeks. Post-infectious fatigue may occur. There is no carrier state. Rarely does an overwhelming, fatal case occur. Permanent liver damage is very unusual.

Symptoms of Hepatitis A:

- **Nausea**
- **Vomiting**
- **Jaundice (the yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes)**
- **Low-grade fever (fever up to 102 degrees)**
- **Fatigue**
- **Pain in your abdomen, especially on your right side**
- **Dark-colored urine**
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Muscle pain**

If you have Hepatitis A: You must visit your physician until you are released from follow-up. The only cure for Hepatitis A is time and your body's defenses.

For proper care: REST at home until you are told you can increase your activities. There is no special DIET. Eat three well-balanced meals a day (the meals will be small until your appetite increases). Do not drink alcohol until you've recovered completely, and your laboratory tests of liver function have been normal for over a month. Only take MEDICINES your physician recommends.

PROTECT OTHERS by hand washing, using separate plates, glasses, utensils and a separate toilet if possible. Take these precautions until your doctor tells you that you are no longer contagious.



PREVENTION: There is a vaccine for Hepatitis A available for persons two and older.

- Wash your hands before and after cooking, after using the bathroom, and after changing diapers.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating and avoid raw or undercooked meat and fish.
- If you've been exposed to Hepatitis A and have never had the virus or the vaccine, your physician may be able to give you a shot to prevent the disease.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: _____
