

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is an infectious acute disease of the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). The hepatitis A virus is a member of the picornavirus family and an enterovirus spread via the fecal-oral route with an average incubation period of 4 weeks. The incidence of hepatitis A is much higher in developing countries and regions with poor hygiene. In these areas, the illness is often contracted in early childhood and rarely causes clinical signs and symptoms. In industrialized countries, the infection is often contracted by susceptible adults who get infected by the virus during trips to countries with high incidence of disease. In most individuals, HAV infection causes a self-limited disease that does not result in chronic infection. Patients that are not asymptomatic have symptoms of jaundice, fever and vomiting. Acute liver failure from HAV is rare.



PLAY PICMONIC

Characteristics

Picornavirus

[Pickle-corn-virus](#)

Picornaviruses are nonenveloped, single stranded positive sense RNA viruses with an icosahedral capsid. This virus family includes many important human pathogens including enteroviruses and rhinoviruses. Enteroviruses that cause human disease include poliovirus, echovirus, coxsackievirus, and hepatitis A virus.

4 Week Incubation Period

[\(4\) Fork](#)

Compared to the other hepatitis infections, HAV has a relatively short incubation period of about 4 weeks (average of 28 days). This incubation period is variable, however, and ranges from 15-50 days.

Fecal-oral

[Apple falling in feces](#)

This virus is spread via the fecal-oral route and transmitted by ingestion of contaminated food or water.

Day Care Centers

[Day care kids with toys](#)

There is increased incidence of HAV in children in daycare centers due to increased fecal-oral contact.

Travel to Developing Countries

[Traveling-backpacker](#)

In industrialized countries, the infection is often contracted by susceptible adults who get infected by the virus during trips to developing countries with high incidence of disease.

Signs and Symptoms

Usually Asymptomatic

[Asymptomatic happy children](#)

In most children, HAV infection is usually asymptomatic and rarely causes clinical signs and symptoms.

Acute Disease

[Acute angle sign](#)

HAV does not result in chronic infection of the liver.

Jaundice

[Jaundice-janitor](#)

Individuals that suffer from clinical symptoms of HAV often experience jaundice, which is yellowing of the skin and sclera due to hyperbilirubinemia, often caused by liver damage.

Fever

[Fever-beaver](#)

Individuals that suffer from clinical symptoms of HAV often experience fever.

Vomiting

[Vomit](#)

Individuals that suffer from clinical symptoms of HAV often have vomiting.