

HEPATITIS A

INFORMATION FOR FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS



Managers of food establishments and permit holders must ensure all food handlers follow health, hygiene and sanitation requirements to prevent the spread of hepatitis A.

WHAT IS HEPATITIS A?

[Hepatitis A](#) is a very contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. It can range from a mild infection lasting a few weeks with no symptoms to a severe illness lasting several months that can result in liver failure and even death.

Hepatitis A can spread when someone touches objects or consumes food or drinks contaminated with undetectable amounts of stool (feces) from someone who has the virus. It is also spread through close contact with someone who has the virus.

HOW DO I PREVENT THE SPREAD OF HEPATITIS A?

Wash hands with soap and water.

- **Ensure workers are trained** on handwashing procedures and expectations.
- **Monitor for proper handwashing.**
- Print and post [handwashing reminders](#).

Prevent bare hand contact with food.

- **Use utensils** (e.g., tongs or forks) to handle ready-to-eat food.
- **Wear food service gloves** to prevent the spread of hepatitis A and other germs.

Properly clean and sanitize surfaces touched by people.

Follow these [cleaning and disinfecting guidelines](#) to prevent the spread of hepatitis A.

WHO SHOULD I NOTIFY?

Food handlers must tell their manager right away if they have:

- **Diarrhea or vomiting**
- **Jaundice** (yellowing of skin and eyes)
- **Been diagnosed with hepatitis A**
- **Had close personal contact** or are living with someone diagnosed with hepatitis A within the past 30 days

Food handlers with diarrhea or vomiting must **not enter the food establishment** until they have at least 24 hours with no symptoms.

The manager of the food establishment **must report to the local health department** when a food handler has jaundice or a hepatitis A diagnosis.

Food handlers must **not handle unwrapped foods** for at least 30 days if they had close personal contact or are living with someone diagnosed with hepatitis A.

FOOD SERVICE MANAGERS SHOULD TALK WITH EMPLOYEES ABOUT SYMPTOMS.

- **Federal and state food codes require employees tell their managers about foodborne illness-related symptoms.**
- **ADA and HIPAA do not prevent food service managers from [asking employees](#) about illness symptoms.**
- **Food service managers and employees can collaborate to prevent the spread of foodborne illness by fostering a culture of open communication about illness symptoms.**

Contact EH&S's Public Health program at 206.616.1623 or phdept@uw.edu with questions.