

# Hepatitis A: After Your Visit

## Your Care Instructions

Hepatitis A is an inflammation of the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus. The virus is found in the stool of an infected person. It is spread when a person eats food or drinks water that has come in contact with infected stool. Once you are infected, you may not notice symptoms for up to 30 days. But you can give the infection to other people both before and after you have symptoms. Most people who get hepatitis A get better within 2 months and do not have liver problems later.

If you were exposed to the virus in the past 2 weeks, you may have been given a shot. It may prevent symptoms of infection.

Hepatitis A can cause tiredness, nausea, diarrhea, yellowing of your skin and eyes (jaundice), vomiting, and dehydration (severe loss of water). Once you have had hepatitis A, you cannot get it again. But you can still get other forms of hepatitis.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

- ε Reduce your activity level to match your energy level.
- ε Avoid alcohol for 2 to 3 months. It can make liver problems worse.
- ε Make sure your doctor knows all the medicines you take. Some medicines, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), can make liver problems worse. Do not take any new medicines unless your doctor says it is okay.
- ε Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- ε If you have nausea or vomiting, try to eat smaller meals and eat more often.
- ε Drink plenty of fluids, enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.
- ε If you have itchy skin, keep cool, stay out of the sun, and wear cotton clothing. Talk to your doctor about using over-the-counter medicines, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) or loratadine (Claritin), to control the itching. Read and follow the instructions on the label.

## To avoid spreading hepatitis A

- ε Wash your hands with soap and hot water right after you use the toilet and before you prepare food.
- ε Tell those you live with or have sex with that you have hepatitis A. They may need a shot to prevent infection.
- ε Avoid any anal contact with a sex partner while you are infected.
- ε Tell your doctor or other health care professional, dentist, and anyone else who may come in contact with your blood or stools about your illness.
- ε Do not donate blood. Once you have had hepatitis A, you can no longer give blood.

## When should you call for help?

**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- ε You passed out (lost consciousness).
- ε You vomit blood or what looks like coffee grounds.

ε You are suddenly confused and cannot think clearly.

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

ε You are dizzy or lightheaded, or you feel like you may faint.

ε You have signs of needing more fluids. You have sunken eyes and a dry mouth, and you pass only a little dark urine.

ε You have nausea and vomiting that does not go away.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

ε You do not get better as expected.

## **Where can you learn more?**

Go to [www.southdenvergi.com](http://www.southdenvergi.com), log into the web portal, and enter R693 in the search box to learn more about Hepatitis A: After Your Visit.

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