

**Remember to wash your hands well with soap and water:**

- After using the toilet.
- After cleaning the toilet area.
- After changing nappies.
- After washing soiled bedding or clothes.
- After clearing up after pets.
- After gardening.
- After any cleaning.
- Before preparing food or drink.

# Hepatitis A

An information leaflet published by the  
Southern Health Board



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## What is Hepatitis A?

It is an illness caused by a virus. It can cause jaundice (yellowing of the skin) and dark urine. People with hepatitis often feel generally unwell, with fever, headache, nausea or abdominal pain, for about a week before the jaundice starts. Many people, especially children, may have no symptoms at all and do not turn yellow, but older adults often feel very unwell.

## Is it dangerous?

Almost everybody recovers completely without special treatment and with no long term effects. Hepatitis A should not be confused with hepatitis B. This causes a similar illness but can be much more severe.

## How do I know I have hepatitis A?

The only way to be sure is by a blood test. Your doctor can arrange this.

## How do you catch it?

Hepatitis A virus is excreted in faeces. This virus would usually be in water, food or on unwashed hands. There is an incubation period of two to six weeks before symptoms start.

## How can I avoid it?

Scrupulous attention to hygiene. Always wash and dry your hands after using the toilet. The person who used it before you may have left hepatitis A (or other) germs on the seat, handle or door.

## How long is it infectious for?

You can pass it on to others for one or two weeks before you start to be ill. By the time you have been ill for one week you will no longer be infectious to others, even if you still have symptoms.

## Can I get it again?

No. You can only get hepatitis A once. Many people may have been infected during childhood and had no symptoms. They cannot get it again.

## Is there a vaccine?

A vaccine against hepatitis A is now available for all. It may be useful for people who often travel to countries where hepatitis A is more common.

*In certain circumstances other medical treatments may be advised.*



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