Hepatitis A Fact Sheet

Cause	Hepatitis A virus (HAV) Non-enveloped virus of the Picornoviridae family One serotype identified Identified in 1972 HAV is an enteric viral infection, generally transmitted through a fecal-oral route.
Clinical Characteristics	Incubation Period ……………………………… From 10-15 days, average 28-30 days Acute Illness …………………………………… Can cause a renewed illness up to one year after initial infection. This can happen in about 15% of patients. Chronic Infection ……………………………… People usually do not remain infected for life. The body will most often fight off the virus naturally. Global Incidence ……………………………… 1.5 million cases each year. Global Prevalence ……………………………… 15-100% in various parts of the world. Recovering from a Hepatitis A (Hep A) infection results in lifelong immunity that will protect you from getting Hep A again.
Signs and Symptoms	≫ Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), other general symptoms such as uneasiness, loss of appetite, pain in the stomach area, dark urine and fatigue. ≫ Most people mild to serious Hep A recover naturally.
Modes of Transmission	≫ Exposure to water or food products contaminated with HAV (feces containing the virus) ≫ Transmission through household or sexual contact is seen as a very rare event, particularly in heterosexual relationships ≫ Transmission through blood does not happen often.
Persons at Risk	Persons Level of Risk People working in the food handling industry High exposed to contaminated food or water People who inject drugs Medium People living, visiting or working in Medium developing countries Inmates in prisons or jails Medium Household contacts of HAV individuals Medium Hemophiliacs Low Individuals with long-term liver disease may be at higher risk for a more serious hepatitis infection
Prevention	≫ A vaccine to protect against HAV is available. A combination vaccine for Hep A and B is also available.
Treatment	There is no effective treatment to date. People generally recover from symptoms in 4 to 6 weeks.
Canadian Data on the trends of HAV	≫ The incidence of Hep A was approximately 2.9 cases for every 100,000 persons in 1999 (Health Canada, Notifiable Diseases Online)