

# Hepatitis A

What you can do to reduce the risk of becoming ill due to Hepatitis A

## What is Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is inflammation of the liver caused by infection with the hepatitis A virus (also known as HAV). HAV can be contracted by close contact with an infected person or by consuming food or water contaminated with the virus.

People usually recover from Hepatitis A within a few months, although it can occasionally be severe and even life threatening.

People with an underlying health condition (such as cancer, diabetes, liver and kidney disease) and older people have a greater risk of becoming severely ill with Hepatitis A. Pregnant women may be at increased risk of preterm labour if infection occurs in the second or third trimester.

Hepatitis A infection does occur in the UK, but it is more [common in countries where sanitation and sewage disposal can be poor](#) (particularly Africa, northern and southern Asia, Central America and southern and eastern Europe).

You can find information on the symptoms of Hepatitis A and how it makes you ill on the [NHS Hepatitis page](#) or on the [UKHSA Hepatitis A web page](#).

## Northern Ireland

[Northern Ireland specific information on Hepatitis A](#)

## Wales

[Wales specific information on Hepatitis A](#)

## How you can contract Hepatitis A

HAV can be contracted by close contact with an infected person or through consumption of food or water contaminated with the virus.

You can be infected with the HAV by:

- close contact with someone who has hepatitis A infection
- eating food prepared by someone with the infection who hasn't washed their hands properly
- eating contaminated food or water e.g. raw fruit and veg (including berries and salad), shellfish or ice cubes made with contaminated water

Foodborne HAV outbreaks in the UK have been associated with:

- imported frozen berries
- imported fresh berries

- imported dates
- infected food handlers
- shellfish

## How to reduce the risk of Hepatitis A at home

The most important steps to prevent the spread of the infection are:

- [wash your hands](#) regularly with soap and warm water before, during and after meal preparation?
- [wash fruit and vegetables](#) before eating
- handle food carefully in your kitchen?and wash chopping boards and utensils?to avoid [cross-contamination](#)
- [clean](#) surfaces properly before and after cooking
- [cook food correctly](#)?by following the instructions on time and temperature

It is important to be aware that HAV can be widespread in areas with poor sanitation. When travelling to parts of the world with poor sanitation, you can reduce your risk of HAV infection by taking precautions including good food and water hygiene measures.

If you're travelling abroad, please refer to:

- [Country-specific HAV advice](#)
- [Food and water safety advice](#)