



Hepatitis A information for food managers and operators

Help stop the spread of hepatitis A, and keep your employees and customers healthy.

In response to a recent increase of hepatitis A in Colorado, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is providing the following guidance to food facilities.

About hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus that affects the liver. Symptoms can start within 15-50 days of exposure and last for several weeks. Not everyone who is infected will have all the symptoms. Symptoms include:

- Jaundice (yellowing skin and whites of eyes)
- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue/tired
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Dark-colored urine
- Pale or clay-colored stool

When a person is infected with hepatitis A, they shed the virus in their stool (feces). A person is exposed to hepatitis A when they ingest (swallow) the virus. Hep A is spread from person to person by:

- Putting something in your mouth that has been contaminated by an infected person.
- Consuming food that has been improperly handled by an infected person.
- By close personal contact, such as sex or caring for a person who has hepatitis A.

How to reduce the spread of hepatitis A in your food facility

- Make sure employees experiencing any symptoms listed above report those to restaurant management.
- Follow safe food handling practices:
 - Hygienic practices.
 - Hand washing.
 - No bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods.
- Ask employees to inform you right away if they have a household member or other close contact who has been diagnosed with hepatitis A.
- Hepatitis A can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine.
 - In Colorado, food handlers are not required to have hepatitis A vaccine, but vaccination can protect food handlers from becoming ill and infecting others.
 - Vaccine is available through most health care providers and pharmacies. People can visit vaccinefinder.org to find locations.
 - Those without health insurance coverage should contact the local health department to check on availability of free or low-cost vaccine.

What to do if you find out about an infected worker or have a worker with symptoms

- Send the worker home.
- Immediately notify your local health department and ask them:
 - What to do next?
 - When the employee can return to work?

What to expect if you have a hepatitis A-positive employee

Local public health will work with you to minimize the impact on your business. When you contact your local health department, you will be asked to provide:

- The employee's work schedule and contact information.
- The employee's duties.
- Names of co-workers.

For more answers about hepatitis A, call CO-Help at 303-389-1687 or 1-877-462-2911, or email them at COHELP@RMPDC.org. You can also access the CDPHE website at www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/hepa.