

INFORMATION FOR FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS ON

HEPATITIS A

What *is* Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. It can be spread easily among your customers through food service and handling and can cause illness for weeks or even months.

YOU Can Help Prevent the Spread of the Hepatitis A Virus.

The Georgia Department of Public Health has noted a concerning increase of hepatitis A cases in our area, and the North Georgia Health District wishes to be proactive in preventing an outbreak through foods. **No cases of food transmission have occurred here at this time**, but the potential for transmission through foods and food handling cannot be underestimated, especially in ready-to-eat foods and cold foods.



A person infected with hepatitis A is capable of infecting others two weeks before having the first symptoms. This means an infected food employee may transmit the disease through food handling before anyone is even aware that the employee is sick. Therefore, prevention by frequent handwashing and glove use is critical at all times. Food preparers must properly wash their hands twice after going to the restroom and put on disposable gloves when preparing all ready-to-eat foods. Additionally, hands must be washed after taking a pair of gloves off and before putting on a new pair.

While not required, employees who prepare foods should be encouraged to seek vaccination for hepatitis A at their local county health department. Regardless of insurance status, there is currently no out-of-pocket cost for this vaccine. County health departments in the North Georgia Health District are in Cherokee, Fannin, Gilmer, Murray, Pickens and Whitfield counties. Each has hepatitis A vaccine. Their contact information is on our website at www.nghd.org.



Management and the Person-In-Charge (PIC) at a food service establishment are responsible for ensuring:

1. All food employees have been trained and understand their responsibility to report certain illnesses, including hepatitis A.
2. The county environmental health office is immediately notified of reportable diseases in employees.
3. Observation of employees who might be experiencing symptoms of hepatitis A, especially jaundice with abdominal pain or discomfort.
4. Knowledge of whether to restrict or exclude a symptomatic employee and when it is safe for such an employee to be removed from exclusion or restriction.
5. Foods are prepared in a manner that would prevent transmission of hepatitis A and other diseases.
6. Restrooms for employees and the public are frequently cleaned, sanitized and supplied with soap, running water, paper towels, toilet paper and trash cans. Handwashing sinks in the kitchen and elsewhere must also be frequently cleaned, sanitized and supplied.

Please be familiar with **Rules and Regulations for Food Service** Chapter 511-6-1, particularly the section on Employee Health, and refer to *Employee Health Red Book* at <http://nghd.org/locations/envhealth/foodservice.html>.

RESOURCES: *Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Handbook* (available online from FDA)
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/)

www.nghd.org
706-529-5757

