

Fact Sheet

Hepatitis A

Introduction

I chose to research the topic of Hepatitis A because I was curious about what it was. I always wondered why when a person goes for physicals the doctor's always check to see if you were vaccinated with the hepatitis vaccines. I've always wondered what was so significant about having these vaccines. From my basic knowledge I've always knew Hepatitis could infect the liver. Although I do not know anyone infected with this disease I was curious as to whether there was a cure for this. I was also wondering how many people each year in the United States is infected by Hepatitis A. Who's more at risk for contracting this virus and how do people protect themselves against this disease? Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease that is caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV).

Section 1: Background and Problem Statement

- **Web site #1: National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NIDDK)**
Although Healthy People 2010 did not have information on this topic I found this site to have a lot of information
- **Web address: http://digestive.nidk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/hepa_ez/#1**
- **Background Information:**
 - This site is dedicated to finding out information that deals with digestive disorders including Hepatitis A. It is defined as the health issue dealing with the liver. The liver becomes inflamed and it tends to hurt the individuals who have it severely. The public knows Hepatitis A as, "*The painful red swelling that results when tissues of the body become injured or infected. Inflammation can cause organs to not work properly.*" This Web site hopes that through research and other aid that people will participate in clinical trials and play more active roles in their health care.

- **Web site #2: Center for Disease Control Prevention**
- **Web address: <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HAV/index.htm>**
- **Background Information:**
 - This Web site states Hepatitis, whether it's A, B, or C can all be the leading cause for liver cancer. Hepatitis A can be transmitted by fecal-oral route which from my understanding is when substances are

discharged out of the body through the feces that enters the body through the mouth. *“HAV infection is primarily transmitted by the fecal-oral route, by either person-to-person contact or consumption of contaminated food or water.”* Vaccination is the best way to prevent the spread the Hepatitis A virus. The disease can affect just about anyone. It can be passed along from person to person by people who already have the disease. These people are most likely people who travel; already infect people, people who use drugs or gay men. This site basically gives feedback on the virus and how it spreads and who spreads it. It also states how it can be prevented.

- **Web site #3 Name: Medline Plus**
- **Web address: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/hepatitisa.html>**
- **Background Information:**
 - Hepatitis A is highly contagious virus. This site basically explains how Hepatitis A can spread. Some ways that people can come in contact with this disease other than person-to-person can be through not washing their hands after changing diapers, and letting people with the virus prepare food for others and that person doesn't wash their hands. Drinking contaminated water can also lead to the spread of the virus. *“Healthy habits also make a difference. Wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food, after using the toilet or after changing a diaper. International travelers should be careful about drinking tap water”* (paragraph 3).

Section 2: Research

Web site #1 Name: Lab Test Online

- **Web address: http://www.labtestsonline.org/understanding/analytes/hepatitis_a/test.html**
Summary of the research:
 - Researchers basically say that in past years there was no real way for them to know what to do as far as vaccinations for people who were infected. They basically waited for people to contract the virus then gave them a drug to treat their infections. *“In June 2007, guidelines in the United States were changed to recommend that you be given the hepatitis A vaccine after exposure if you are 40 years old or younger.”* There is still not much information known as far as whether this vaccine is helpful since researchers just developed this a little over three years ago. This site also talks about how researchers have developed tests to try and find out at what point does Hepatitis A enter

and start to affect the liver. This test can read positive for the disease if a person is infected or have been infected in the past.

- **Web site #2 Name: New York Times**
- **Web address: <http://health.nytimes.com/health/guides/disease/hepatitis-a/overview.html>**
- **Summary of the research:**
- According to the New York Times, people who have ever been infected with the Hepatitis A virus and it goes away is more than likely it will not return. Basically, once it goes away then it is completely out of the body. The New York Times officially say that the best cure for the acute stage of hepatitis A is nothing more than getting a lot of rest until you feel that the virus has passed. *“Over 85% of people with hepatitis A recover within 3 months. Nearly all patients get better within 6 months. There is a low risk of death, usually among the elderly and persons with chronic liver disease”*- September 29, 2010. After the virus has completely passed there are really no known complications reported. In other words the hepatitis A virus is a serious public health factor just because of the fact that it is contagious and any person can be at risk of catching the virus. On the other hand if an individual does come in contact with it they can recover.
- **Web site #3 Name: CKS**
- **Web address: http://www.cks.nhs.uk/patient_information_leaflet/hepatitis_a#**
- **Summary of the research:**
- Practicing good hygiene is a good way to prevent the spread of Hepatitis A. Researchers feel that it is extremely important that people wash their hands after using the bathroom and also before preparing food. Not sharing things, such as toothbrushes and eating utensils can also stop the spread of the virus.

Section 3: Statistics

- **Web site #1 Name: U.S. Food and Drug Administration**
- **Web address:**
<http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/FoodborneIllness/FoodborneIllnessFoodbornePathogensNaturalToxins/BadBugBook/ucm071294.htm>
- **Summary of the statistics:**
 - FDA officials say that *“About 22,700 cases of hepatitis A representing 38% of all hepatitis cases are reported annually in the U.S.”* This disease is more common in adults rather than kids although children too are susceptible to this virus if they are not protected. Individuals that are infected 8 out of 10 times will recover and have minor injuries such as a stomach ache or feel a little

nauseated. Patients who ever reported to have passed from Hepatitis A were elderly people who already had existing health problems. An ideal recovery could take anywhere from 1 to 2 weeks, maybe longer depending on how severe an individual's case may be. *"Less than 0.4% of the reported cases in the U.S. are fatal."* Judging by this site's statistics Hepatitis A isn't a problem that is rapidly increasing. If people are infected or believe that they are all they have to do is simply visit the doctor. With the proper care people recover in a rather short time period with no real harm done to the body.

- **Web site #2 Name:** Hepatitis Foundation International
- **Web address:** http://www.hepfi.org/living/liv_abc.html?gclid=CPjO17CZrqQCFUmA5QodYDNL0w
- **Summary of the statistics:**
 - Children and adults who live in areas where diseases are at a high rate may be the most targeted individuals. Approximately 100 Americans die each year from Hepatitis A, which is not a lot of people. These cases more than likely were bad cases. This site also says that in 2005, there were an estimated 42,000 Hepatitis A infections.

- **Web site #3:** Scielo Public Health
- **Web address:** http://www.scielosp.org/scielo.php?pid=S0036-36342005000600003&script=sci_arttext
- **Summary of the statistics:**
 - This site is basically dedicated to giving statistics for the state of California because it has a large population. And wherever there is a large population there will be high rates of infectious and contagious diseases. In California, hepatitis A laid a heavy burden on the Latino populations, with children suffering higher rates than adults and far higher rates than their non-Latino counterparts. This site also explains that although by law health care providers are supposed to report this disease, it is often missed. In other words, there may be many more cases across the world that have gone undetected.

Section 4: Consumer Information

- **Web site #1 Name: FamilyDoctor.Org**
- **Web address:**
<http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/infections/hepatitis/897.html>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - Hepatitis symptoms can include all of the following: nausea, vomiting, jaundice, low-grade fever, and fatigue, pain in your abdomen, especially on your right side, dark-colored urine, and loss of appetite, muscle pain and itching. In some cases it can go undetected for a long period of time. Children in most cases have mild cases while Adults may have more severe cases.

- **Web site #2 Name: American Liver Foundation**
- **Web address:** <http://www.liverfoundation.org/about/advocacy/hepapolicy/>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - “In the United States, hepatitis A is one of the most frequently reported vaccine-preventable diseases, ranking sixth among the top ten causes of food-borne illness.” The hepatitis A virus develops over a 15 to 50 day period and can take anywhere from 3 to 6 months to go away.

- **Web site #3 Name: Web MD**
- **Web address:** <http://www.webmd.com/hepatitis/digestive-diseases-hepatitis-a>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - Besides the fact that Hepatitis can spread from person to person through the fecal-oral route or by people not washing their hands this Web site also explains how people can contract the virus. Eating contaminated fruits, vegetables, or eating raw shellfish harvested from water contaminated with the virus can be an easy way to come in contact with Hepatitis A, according to Web MD. Blood tests can detect the presence of the virus.

Section 5: Solutions to the Problem (or Issue)

- **Web site #1 Name: National Network for Immunization Information**
- **Web address:** <http://www.immunizationinfo.org/vaccines/hepatitis#related-issues>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - This Web site was put in place in order to educate and provide up-to-date, science-based information to professionals, to the media and to the public. Officials who created this page feel that people should know the facts about vaccines and immunizations. This specific page about Hepatitis A is dedicated to educating people on what the disease is. Its aim is to get people to understanding the disease; it also gives names of products that can be possible vaccinations for the virus. This site also gives the history, and states some facts on who should and should not receive the vaccine.

- **Web site #2 Name: American Social Health Association**
- **Web address:** <http://www.ashastd.org/hepmen/index2.html>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - The ASHA is an association dedicated to informing the public about the causes and ways to prevent HAV. *“Since 1914, the American Social Health Association (ASHA) has been dedicated to improving the health of individuals, families, and communities, with a focus on preventing sexually transmitted diseases and infection.”* The reason I found this site to be a good source of information is because it educates gay men and not just people in general. In this specific section it gives resources such as referral to other Web sites to educate gay men and lesbian women. The ASHA says that men who have sex with other men can be at risk for not only hepatitis A but also for the hepatitis B virus which is the next level and can be a more severe virus.

- **Web site #3 Name: Alert Health**
- **Web address:** <http://www.hep-c-alert.org/faq.htm>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - Alert Health Mission statement is to improve the health and quality of life for people at risk for chronic disease, by providing accessible, integrated preventive health services. They also give feedback on what HAV is and how it affects people. They also advocate other

Hepatitis viruses along with other diseases in order to inform the public on how to practice healthy health habits!

Conclusions

Before doing this fact sheet project I had no clue on what hepatitis A and what it could mean to infected people. All I ever knew about the disease was that I was required to get two doses when I was younger so that I was vaccinated against whatever this virus was. As I completed this fact sheet I learned a lot of new information that is helpful to me. I always knew that you could spread germs by not washing your hands but I never knew that you could spread the Hepatitis virus this way also.

Although there are known cases of Hepatitis A, I don't think it is big public health issue like obesity or heart diseases. I say this because 9 times out 10 a person with HAV will more than likely recover at a rapid pace. It only takes a few weeks (4 to 6) make a full recovery. I've also learned that the only cure for HAV is proper immunizations. The best way to prevent the virus is to get vaccinated, keep your hands clean, don't not engage in sexually risk behaviors, and practice good hygiene. If a person is infected or think they are they should contact their health providers as soon as possible so that they don't spread the highly contagious virus to others.

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