

Hepatitis A FAQ

North Carolina is experiencing a hepatitis A outbreak, including in the Alliance service area. Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable illness. You can help to prevent the infection from spreading.

What is Hepatitis A and how is it spread?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by a virus spread from person to person. The illness can last for weeks to months. Hepatitis A spreads through the fecal-oral route, most commonly by forgetting to wash your hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers, having sexual contact with infected partners, and eating, drinking foods, or smoking cigarettes or using drugs contaminated by hepatitis A virus.

These priority populations should get the hepatitis A vaccine:

- People who are homeless.
- People who use injection and non-injection illegal drugs.
- People who have close contact with, care for, or live with someone who has hepatitis A.
- Men who have sexual encounters with other men.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Although not all people infected with hepatitis A virus experience illness, symptoms can include nausea, fever, yellowing of the eyes and skin, dark urine, grey feces, joint pain, feeling tired, loss of appetite, and stomach pain.

What can I do to prevent the spread of the virus?

- Get vaccinated against hepatitis A.
- Wash hands after using the restroom and before eating or preparing meals for yourself or others.
- Use your own towels, toothbrushes, and eating utensils.
- Do not have sex with someone who has hepatitis A infection.
- Do not share food, drinks, drugs, or cigarettes (including e-cigarettes) with other people.

If you think you may have hepatitis A, see your medical provider

If you have hepatitis A, please cooperate with your local public health to help protect others.

Is there more than one kind of shot (vaccination injection)?

Hepatitis A vaccine is for those who are at least 12 months of age. Immune globulin is given to those under 12 months, those who are immunocompromised, those with chronic liver disease, and those who can't receive hep A vaccine. Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine are needed to ensure best protection. The first dose is greater than 90% effective. Receiving a second dose 6 months later will provide 100% long-lasting protection according to the Division of Public Health. Both doses are available through the health department or at no charge through DPH clinics.

When and where can I get a shot?

The hepatitis A vaccine is available at the health department, federally qualified health centers, and many private providers. The immune globulin is not widely available and may only be available at the health department.

If you have insurance, you can get the vaccine at your regular health provider's office. The vaccine may also be available for FREE for some or all priority populations (listed above) at these locations Monday–Friday:

- Cumberland County Health Department, 1235 Ramsey St., Fayetteville, NC 28301; 910-433-3600
- Durham County Health Department, 414 E Main St., Durham, NC 27701; 919-560-7600
- Johnston County Health Department, 517 N. Brightleaf Blvd., Smithfield, NC 27577; 919-989-5200
- Wake County Public Health Department, 10 Sunnybrook Rd., Raleigh, NC 27610; 919-250-3947

Contact your local public health office for more information: www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/county-health-departments.