

**MSAD # 13 / RSU #83
Health Alert**

**Gastrointestinal Illness – Hepatitis A
Important Notice to Parents
<Date>**

Hepatitis A is a disease of the liver resulting from infection with the hepatitis A virus.

Symptoms can include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, stomach cramps, fever, dark urine, pale or clay-colored stool, loss of appetite, and jaundice. Few cases of children less than 6 years will have jaundice. There is no long-term carrier state with hepatitis A infection. Individuals may be asymptomatic but still infectious.

Hepatitis A symptoms usually occur suddenly and begin 28 - 30 days, range of 15 - 50 days, after exposure. Symptoms typically last less than two months, although 10-15% of cases have symptoms lasting up to 6 months.

The virus is transmitted by the fecal-oral route.

A person can spread hepatitis A 14 days before and 7 days after the onset of jaundice, or if jaundice does not occur, 7 days before and 14 days after the onset of symptoms.

Ill individuals should follow the advice of their primary care provider but generally are instructed to stay home for 7 days after onset of jaundice and 14 days after symptom onset (if no jaundice).

Post-exposure prophylaxis is recommended for household and sexual contacts and contacts exposed to food prepared by the case within two weeks of exposure.

There is a vaccine available for Hepatitis A and when the vaccination schedule is properly followed, the hepatitis A vaccine is nearly 100% effective.

Frequent hand washing, particularly after using the restroom, assisting someone with diarrhea and/or vomiting, after contact with animals, after swimming, and before and after food preparation will help prevent contact with the virus.

Contact your primary care provider if gastrointestinal symptoms last more than a few days or are severe.

Please contact the school nurse, Mel Chadbourne, RN if you have any questions. More information is also available at the Maine CDC web site.