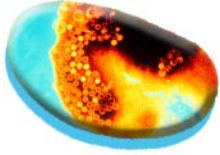


HEPATITIS A



WHAT IS IT?

Hepatitis A is a virus that causes an acute inflammation of the liver and is the most common form of all viral hepatitis. Hepatitis A is encountered frequently in the most disadvantaged geographical regions.

Improvements in hygiene and sanitation have led to a reduction in the circulation of the virus, but not to its complete disappearance.

SYMPTOMS

- Hepatitis A is often asymptomatic in young children, and more severe in adults. After an incubation period of 15 to 45 days, the onset of the disease is marked by a sensation of generalized malaise including, fever, headache, muscle soreness, fatigue, and gastrointestinal disorders. It is often accompanied by jaundice, particularly in adults.

- The condition may be long-lasting, with an acute phase of approximately one month and a convalescence phase of up to 6 months. (6)

- No specific treatment is available.

EPIDEMIOLOGY AND VACCINATION

- Hepatitis A is a strictly human disease. Transmission occurs through the fecal-oral route, from person to person, or by ingestion of contaminated food or drinking water.

- Approximately 1.4 million cases are reported each year, but the true incidence is thought to be 3 to 10 times higher due to the proportion of asymptomatic cases. (5)

- Hepatitis A is most common in urban areas but the incidence rates differ according to geographical regions and socio-economic levels.

- Hepatitis A vaccines are available.

References :

5 - Hepatitis A vaccines. WHO position paper. WER 2000, 75:37-44.

6 - Koff R.S. Clinical Manifestations and Diagnosis of Hepatitis-A Virus Infection. Vaccine 1992; 10 (suppl):S15-S17.