



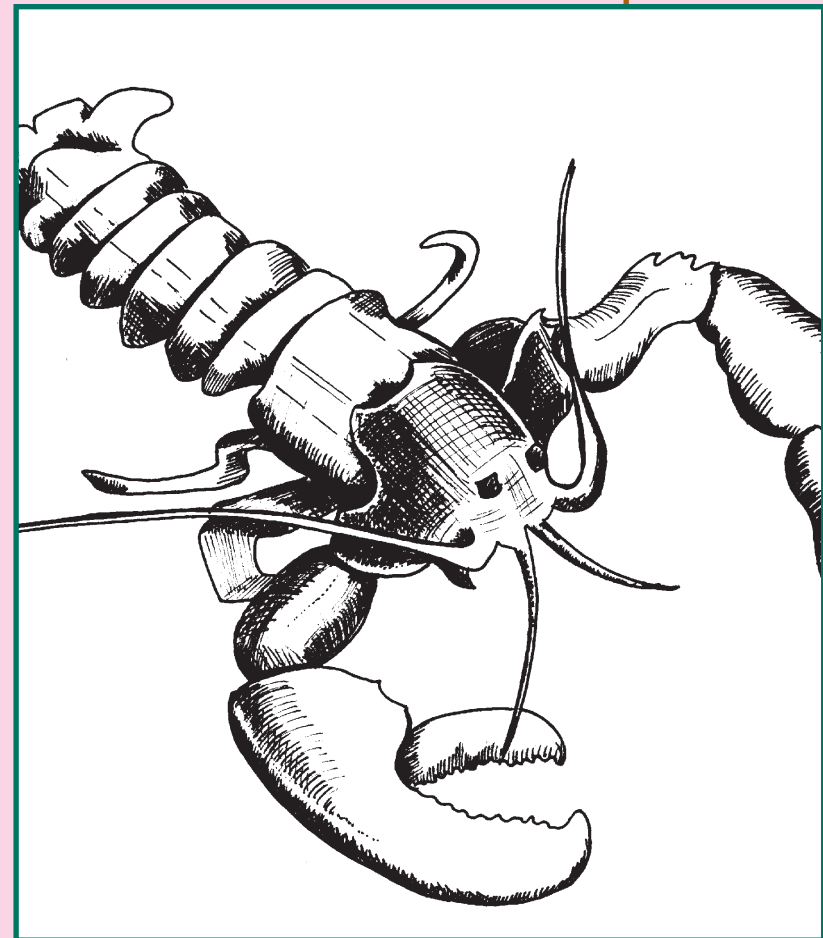
# Hepatitis A

If you need more advice or would like to discuss prevention of food poisoning, please contact the Environmental Health Food Safety Team.

Bracknell Forest Borough Council  
Environment Department  
Time Square  
Market Street  
Bracknell  
Berkshire  
RG12 1JD

☎ 01344 351400

[www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk)



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# Contacting The Environmental Health Food Safety Team

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- if you are a food handler, health care worker or work with the elderly or children under 5 years old, do not return to work until you have checked with the Environmental Health Food Safety Team at the Local Authority

## **Food handlers suffering from food poisoning must also report this matter to their line manager and leave the food handling area**

- if you are not included in the above list of people, generally you can return to work when you meet the following requirements:
  - you have not suffered vomiting in the last 48 hours and any treatment for this has ceased
  - you have not suffered from diarrhoea in the last 48 hours and any treatment for this has ceased
  - you observe good hygiene practice, particularly hand washing
  - children should not go to school or nursery until their symptoms have cleared

Following the advice and precautions in this leaflet could help prevent food poisoning being passed on to other people and it could help prevent you and your family suffering from food poisoning in the future.

Hepatitis A is a viral infection. It causes illness and jaundice, seen as yellowing of the skin, most commonly among young adults and school age children.

## Symptoms

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Include:

- abrupt fever and malaise
- nausea
- loss of appetite
- jaundice (yellowing of the skin) within a few days
- pale stools and dark urine
- children may not show symptoms

Once the person has become infected with the Hepatitis A virus, the main symptoms will not appear for 15 to 50 days (usually 28 days). Illness may last up to 2 weeks; however the jaundice may continue. Most cases are non-infectious after the first week of jaundice.

Duration : usually less than four weeks.

## Sources of Infection

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The commonest sources of infection of Hepatitis A are:

- faecal-oral transmission from person-to-person and animal-to person
- untreated or contaminated water supply
- food contaminated by infected food handlers
- raw or under-cooked shellfish harvested from contaminated waters
- salad items and raspberries

## Prevention

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### Personal Hygiene

Wash hands thoroughly:

- before/after handling food

- after using the toilet
- after changing dirty nappies and soiled clothing
- after touching pets and other animals

If possible do not prepare food for other people when suffering from food poisoning type symptoms

## Cooking

- only use treated water supplies
- when travelling abroad, check beforehand that water and ice are safe to consume, if not or in doubt, make sure it is sterilised using chlorine tablets for example, or buy bottled water
- avoid eating salads and raw fruit/vegetables that have been washed with non-sterilised water, in countries where the water is not safe to consume
- ensure that shellfish are thoroughly cooked
- keep all perishable foods in a refrigerator; your fridge should operate at below 5°C to prevent bacteria growing
- ensure that frozen foods are fully thawed before cooking

## Why Are Environmental Health At The Local Authority Involved?

Doctors and Local Health Authorities have to notify the Local Authority about cases of food poisoning and Environmental Health staff investigate such cases, to prevent the spread of infection and also to help to identify how the infection occurred. We also offer advice and help with any general queries.

Importantly we try to establish the cause of the food poisoning, and we follow this up where necessary by inspecting food premises to help prevent other people suffering.

Additionally, we also provide advice on precautions which should be taken, especially to people in groups where there is a high risk of passing on the infection. This includes food handlers, young children and people who look after the very young, the elderly or the ill.

With some types of food poisoning, you may become a carrier or a symptomless carrier. If you are in the high risk groups mentioned above, you must not return to work unless you meet the following requirements:

- you have not suffered vomiting in the last 48 hours and any treatment for this has ceased
- you have not suffered from diarrhoea in the last 48 hours and any treatment for this has ceased
- you observe good hygiene practice, particularly hand washing

## What To Do Whilst You Or A Member Of Your Family Has Food Poisoning

Take extra care with your hygiene and, in particular, wash hands thoroughly:

- after using the toilet
- before and after handling food especially foods which are not going to be cooked again, e.g. cooked ham
- after handling raw meat and raw vegetables, e.g. raw chicken and dirty potatoes
- before eating or feeding others
- after changing dirty nappies and soiled clothing
- after touching pets and other animals

Whilst symptoms persist, it is important to maintain high standards of hygiene and if possible do not prepare food for other people, to reduce the risk of passing on the infection.