

Hepatitis A and E



Distribution

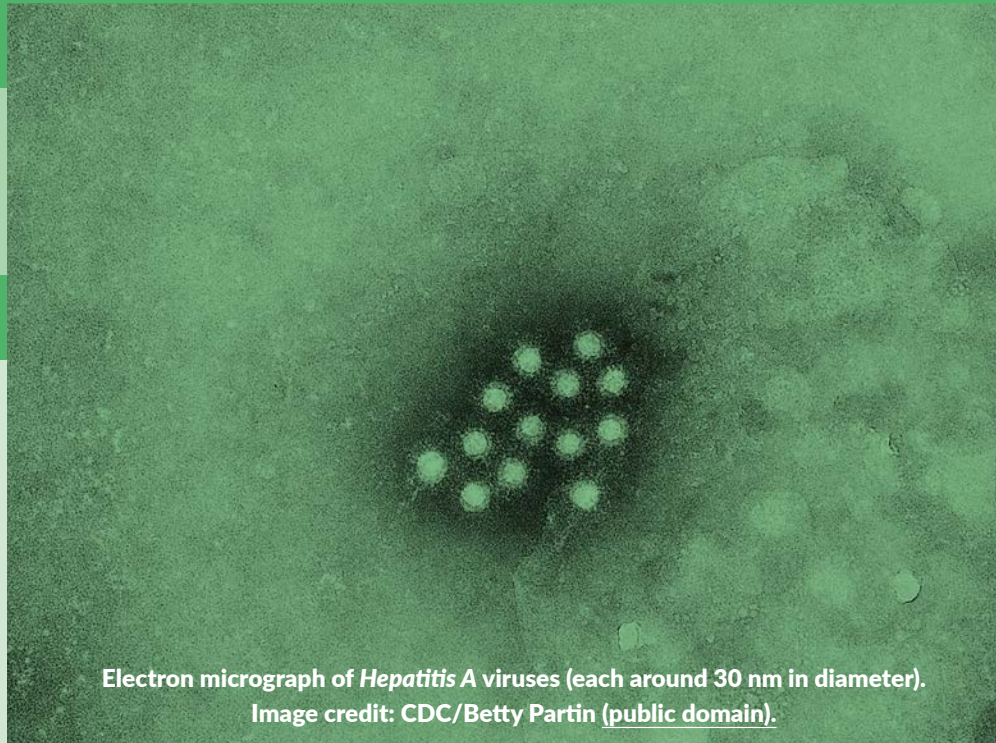
Both viruses are found worldwide and commonly affect people living in areas with poor sanitation and hygiene practices.



Cause

Most people become infected by consuming food or water contaminated with *Hepatitis A* or *E* virus from people's feces.

In some cases, these viruses also spread through other transmission pathways, such as very close physical contact or blood transfusions.



Electron micrograph of *Hepatitis A* viruses (each around 30 nm in diameter).
Image credit: CDC/Betty Partin (public domain).



Symptoms

Symptoms range from mild to severe for both diseases. After entering a person's body, the viruses infect the liver, causing inflammation. Symptoms begin with rapid onset of fever, weakness, stomach pain, and nausea. People become jaundiced as their livers stop functioning properly. Symptoms can last for weeks or months.

Pregnant women are at greater risk of severe illness from *Hepatitis E*, and may pass the virus to their babies.



Prevention

- Use improved latrines to keep feces from the environment.
- Use good hygiene, including hand-washing with soap at all critical times.
- Treat and safely store drinking water.
- Do not consume ice that could have been made from contaminated water.
- Vaccinate at-risk populations against *Hepatitis A*.

HOUSEHOLD WATER TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Most disinfection options, including solar disinfection (SODIS), chlorine, and boiling.
- Filters rated "effective" for viruses (note: most filters are not very effective against viruses).



Treatment

Antibiotics are not effective against these viruses.

Recovery sometimes takes several weeks or months. If dehydrated from diarrhea, drink oral rehydration solution. In severe cases, intravenous fluids may be needed.