

15/03/2024

Kia ora Parent or Guardian

Hepatitis A case at Rutherford College

A child who attends the school has recently been confirmed with hepatitis A, an infection affecting the liver. The illness is usually mild in children but can be severe in adults.

National Public Health Service has assessed the risk of hepatitis A infection spreading to other children, families and staff.

The risk of hepatitis A spreading through the school is low due to good hand washing and hygiene, how infectious the child was likely to be while at school and the type of contact they have had with other children.

Hepatitis A immunisation is sometimes used to try to prevent infection in close contacts of a case, e.g. those in the same household. However, the risk of spread of hepatitis at the school is low, and therefore there is no need for immunisation at this time. If the situation changes, the school and the parents will be informed immediately.

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is caused by a virus, which is found in the faeces (poos) of those with the infection. It can be spread from person-to-person or by eating or drinking contaminated food or water.

Hepatitis A causes a mild illness in children. **The symptoms include fever, an upset stomach, and feeling tired and generally unwell.** Many children do not show any signs that they have been infected. Very occasionally children develop jaundice, a yellowing of the skin and the whites of the eyes.

Teenagers and adults are usually much sicker than children with hepatitis A. People with hepatitis A recover completely with no permanent damage done and develop lifelong immunity so they can't get it again.

What Should You Do

- **Watch your child for symptoms** of hepatitis A. After being exposed to the hepatitis A virus it can take from 2 weeks up to 2 months before a person shows any signs of infection. If you are concerned your child might have hepatitis A, see your GP. Hepatitis A is diagnosed by a blood test.
- **Teach your children good hand washing.** The best way to prevent the spread of infection is by careful hand washing with soap and proper drying, especially after using the toilet and before eating.

- **For more information.** Please read the factsheets we have provided on hepatitis A and Hand Hygiene (hand washing) or visit www.arphs.health.nz/public-health-topics/disease-and-illness/hepatitis-a/
- If you have any concerns or questions ring Healthline on 0800 611 116. You can contact the service seven days a week and you can also ask for interpreters.

Ngā mihi

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