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## NF94-171 Hepatitis A virus

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## *Hepatitis A virus*

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*By Susan S. Sumner, Extension Food Microbiologist  
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- The Disease:** The illness caused by the Hepatitis A virus is characterized by fever, nausea, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, and jaundice. These symptoms may appear 10 to 14 days after ingesting contaminated foods. Persons may shed the Hepatitis A virus in their feces before disease symptoms appear.
- The Organism:** The Hepatitis A virus is an ultramicroscopic organism that must have a host to reproduce. This virus, when transferred to food, may survive for several days, even at refrigeration temperatures.
- Sources:** Any food item can be a carrier of the virus. The virus cannot grow or multiply in the food but it can remain viable in foods for long periods of time. Infected persons can transfer the virus to food.
- Control:** Proper hand washing techniques and hygiene practices are necessary to prevent transfer of the Hepatitis A virus from infected persons to food. Thorough cooking of food may destroy the virus if present. Persons infected with the Hepatitis A virus should not handle food until they have received the proper medical treatment and are no longer shedding the virus.
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