

Rifampicin

an antibiotic for contacts of a person with meningococcal infection

Rifampicin is an antibiotic that is sometimes given to those in close contact with a person who has developed a meningococcal infection. The purpose of this antibiotic is to get rid of any meningococcal germs being 'carried' in the throat of contacts so that they cannot lead to further infections. The antibiotic does not treat someone who is already developing the infection: you need to know what signs (of meningococcal infection) to look out for regardless of taking rifampicin.

Dosage of rifampicin

Rifampicin is taken twice daily for 2 days (a total of 4 doses). It should be taken on an empty stomach: half an hour before or 2 hours after food. A few people feel 'off' after taking rifampicin: stomach upset, headache and dizziness can occur.

Rifampicin should **not** be taken by a person who:

- has severe liver impairment (including yellow jaundice);
- is an alcoholic, or
- is pregnant

Side effects of rifampicin

Rifampicin turns urine and tears a pink-orange colour. This discolouration is harmless and stops when the medication is discontinued. Rifampicin can permanently stain soft contact lenses so use during treatment should be avoided.

Interaction with other medications

It is important to inform the person prescribing you rifampicin if you are taking any of the following prescription drugs: anticoagulants such as warfarin, steroids, several drugs for heart disease, tablets to control diabetes, tablets for epilepsy, tablets for asthma, methadone, antiviral agents, antidepressants and cyclosporin. The dosage of these medications may need to be adjusted while you are taking rifampicin.

Rifampicin can reduce the effectiveness of contraceptives.

Women taking the oral contraceptive pill or using progestogen only contraceptives, including implants, should use additional barrier contraception such as condoms while taking rifampicin and for 4 weeks after the last dose of rifampicin. The oral contraception should continue to be taken, however any pill-free or sugar pill days should be omitted while taking rifampicin and for 7 days after the last dose.

For more information contact your nearest Centre for Disease Control

Darwin	8922 8044
Katherine	8973 9049
Nhulunbuy	8987 0359
Tennant Creek	8962 4259
Alice Springs	8951 7549

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What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis is a general term used to describe inflammation of the liver. A variety of viruses and other substances, such as alcohol, can cause hepatitis. The hepatitis A virus is the most common virus that causes hepatitis.

How is it spread?

This virus passes through the digestive system of people with the infection and is spread when something contaminated with infected faeces is swallowed. Only a small amount of virus is necessary to spread the infection. The virus can potentially survive on objects and water for months.

The virus can be passed on:

- by food, drink, eating utensils, toys or other objects that have been handled by an infected person
- after touching infected nappies, linen and towels or someone else's hands that have been in contact with faeces
- by oro-anal sex

Outbreaks have also been reported as a result of drinking or bathing in water contaminated by sewage, or by eating shellfish, particularly oysters contaminated by sewage.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms generally develop 1 month after infection but may develop from 2 weeks to 2 months after infection.

Hepatitis A is an acute illness, starting with fever, loss of appetite, nausea, tiredness, abdominal discomfort and feeling generally unwell. Urine may become dark in colour and faeces paler. The eyes and skin may then become a yellow colour (jaundice), however this is may be difficult to see in dark skinned people. The skin may also become itchy.

The symptoms are generally more severe in adults than children. Many children will not

show any sign of the infection or have a mild illness without any jaundice.

The length and severity of illness varies but most people feel well within a month of onset. Complications are rare. Hepatitis A does not cause chronic liver disease and people do not become 'carriers', as can occur with hepatitis B or C. After a person has recovered from hepatitis A, they cannot get it again.

What is the infectious period?

Infected people can pass the virus to others from 2 weeks before feeling unwell, until 1 week after the appearance of jaundice.

Who is at risk?

Hepatitis A virus is worldwide and can affect anyone. People at higher risk of contracting the infection are:

- international travellers and residents of areas with inadequate waste disposal, contaminated water and/or poor hygiene
- children and staff in day care centres, particularly if children are not toilet trained
- household members and close contacts of an infected person

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A.

How can hepatitis A be prevented?

Good hygiene is the best way to prevent hepatitis A. In situations where good hygiene may be compromised hepatitis A vaccination is recommended.

To avoid faecal spread hands should be washed thoroughly with soap and warm running water for at least 10-15 seconds and thoroughly dried:

- after going to the toilet
- before preparing or handling food
- after every nappy change
- after changing soiled linen