

Practise Food Hygiene to Prevent **Hepatitis A**



Relationship between Hepatitis A and Shellfish

Hepatitis A is a viral infection that affects the liver. It is transmitted by eating or drinking contaminated food and water. The incubation period ranges from 10 days to 50 days (average: 28-30 days). Symptoms may include fatigue, poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal discomfort, jaundice and tea-coloured urine. Hepatitis A virus is excreted in faeces of infected people which can contaminate water or foods. As shellfish live in water and filter out minute living organisms as food, they can be easily contaminated by hepatitis A virus. People may contract hepatitis A after consumption of contaminated shellfish that are not thoroughly cooked.





Prevention

Attention to environmental, food and personal hygiene can minimise the risk of contracting hepatitis A.

(I) Environmental Hygiene

- Dispose of faecal matter properly to avoid contamination of food and water.
- Keep the food preparation areas clean.
- Clean food utensils thoroughly before use.
- Use separate cutting boards, knives and plates for preparing raw shellfish.

(II) Food Hygiene

When eating shellfish (including oysters, clams, mussels and scallops), we should observe the following hygiene guidelines:

Purchase

- Buy shellfish from reliable sources.
- Buy only fresh shellfish with intact shells and free from abnormal odour. Their shells close tightly when tapped.
- Do not buy shellfish from illegal hawkers.

Storage

- Put fresh shellfish in the refrigerator immediately after returning home and consume them within one or two days.
- Store ready-to-eat food on the upper shelf of refrigerator and place covered or wrapped shellfish on the bottom shelf to avoid cross-contamination.

Preparation

- Scrub and rinse shellfish in clean water.
- Discard shellfish with broken shells.
- Remove the intestines of shellfish.

Cooking

- Cook shellfish thoroughly before consumption.
- If possible, remove the shells before cooking as they impede heat penetration.
- Boil shellfish at 100 °C until their shells open. Boil for additional 3-5 minutes afterwards.
- Discard any shellfish that do not open during cooking

(III) Personal Hygiene

- Keep hands clean. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling food, in between handling raw and cooked food, before meals and after using the toilet.

Enquiries

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

24-hour Hotline : 2868 0000

Communication Resource Unit : 2381 6096

Website : www.cfs.gov.hk

E-mail : enquiries@fehd.gov.hk