Country Context
Since the start of the year, the country is experiencing 3 separate clusters of Hepatitis A outbreak in Tripoli, Zahleh and Nabatiyeh. As of 14 June 2022 a total of 555 cases of Hepatitis A were reported. By the end of June, the number of cases of Hepatitis A in Tripoli was starting to decrease, following the chlorination of the water supply by authorities. However, the hepatitis A water quality testing in the Beqaa area affected by the Hepatitis A outbreak is still showing that water is contaminated. In the recent years, the country has witnessed spikes in Hepatitis A cases at the beginning of every summer and winter seasons. Although the number of new cases has been decreasing for this year, there are still ongoing clusters of hepatitis A. As of mid-June 2022, the whole country is facing drastic water shortages, forcing people to pay very high fees to fill their water tanks, if found, from unknown water sources, and there is no way to make sure the water is clean and safe for usage, putting everyone, everywhere, at risk. (8)

Rumor About the Hepatitis A virus began circulating on social media on 5/6/2022 through WhatsApp groups, mainly about children contracting the virus due to the absence of clean-drinking water in locations. Since then, the Ministry of Public Health has been sterilizing water supply and intensifying water safety examinations in areas of outbreak, as well as working with WHO and other NGOs to spread awareness and provide the Hepatitis A vaccine, which is still not available yet.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations: What to do if you suspect you and/or someone you know is sick with Hepatitis A?

Recommendations: How can you protect yourself and your loved ones from Hepatitis A?

WHO is more at risk?

Factors that increase the risk of contracting the virus due to the absence of clean drinking water in locations. Since then, the Ministry of Public Health has been sterilizing water supply and intensifying water safety examinations in areas of outbreak, as well as working with WHO and other NGOs to spread awareness and provide the Hepatitis A vaccine, which is still not available yet.

Fact-checking

- Hepatitis A is an inflammation of the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV).
- Symptoms associated with hepatitis A can include fever, malaise, loss of appetite, diarrhea, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark-colored urine and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes).

- Hepatitis A can be transmitted through the fecal-oral route; that is when an uninfected person ingests food or water that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person.
- Hepatitis A is very contagious, and people can spread the virus well before they feel sick.
- Hepatitis A spreads through improperly cooked food or contaminated water, usually from sewage-contaminated or inadequately treated water.
- The incubation period of hepatitis A is usually 14 to 28 days, (6) meaning a person can start spreading the disease before they start showing symptoms and know that they are sick.
- The hepatitis A virus (HAV) is transmitted through ingestion of contaminated food or water or through direct contact with an infected person. (7)
- Almost everyone recovers fully from hepatitis A with a lifelong immunity. However, a very small proportion of people infected with hepatitis A may die from fulminant hepatitis (4).

- Hepatitis A symptoms can also include the following symptoms which were also mentioned in the rumor: fever, malaise, loss of appetite, diarrhea, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark-colored urine and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes). (9)

- Symptoms may be relatively mild and go away in a few weeks. Sometimes, however, hepatitis A infection results in a severe illness that lasts several months.

SITUATION IN LEBANON

HEPATITIS A (HAV)

Country Context

- How is it Transmitted?

- Hepatitis A is a very contagious, and people can spread the virus well before they feel sick. (14)
- The risk of hepatitis A infection is associated with a lack of safe water, which can be spread due to poor sanitation and hygiene. (15)
- Hepatitis A outbreaks are usually associated with new cases contaminated with the feces of an infected person. (16)
- Hepatitis A and other hepatitis viruses are transmitted through the fecal-oral route; that is when an uninfected person ingests food or water that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person. (16) In this way, they can spread through dirty hands when an infected person prepares or handles food for family members, or when a person touches the diapers of their infected child.
- The virus can also be transmitted through close physical contact with an infected person, although casual contact among people does not spread the virus. (17)
- Breastfeeding your child is safe in case of Hepatitis A infection is active with either mother or child, as long as strict hygiene practices are adhered to, in order to avoid cross-contamination. (18)

- Recommendations: How can you protect yourself and your loved ones from Hepatitis A?

- If you suspect that you or someone you know has a case of Hepatitis A, seek professional help from a primary healthcare facility: a list of health care facilities can be accessed here [source]. You can also contact the UNHCR NEXCare hotline 01 504 020 or 76 864 721 for doctor visits, refugees can also contact the UNHCR NEXCare Hotline 01 504 020 or 76 864 721. For more information, you can also check the UNHCR website at www.unhcr.org or the UNHCR mobile app.

- Make sure you double-dine on personal hygiene practices such as regular hand washing before and after the bathroom, and make sure the water you are using for these purposes is clean and sanitized through chlorination or boiling prior to usage.
- Do not eat raw or uncooked food or any food that is left uncovered and outside of the fridge for more than 2 hours, even if it was cooked (19), and if possible, drink and cook using filtered or boiled water.
- Always store your food, water, and other items in a clean and sanitary condition.
- Avoid sharing eating utensils that are contaminated.
- Avoid touching contaminated surfaces or items that belong to an active case and then placing your hands near or in the mouth. (20)
- In cases of sharing a household with an infected person, avoid sharing their personal items, and clean the bathroom after each use. (20)
- Use condoms correctly as a precautionary measure. (20)
- The vaccination is not yet available because of the economic crisis in Lebanon but it is advised to get it as soon as it is. Several injectable inactivated hepatitis A vaccines are available internationally. (25)
- In males, this may happen through indirect hands when an infected person prepares or handles food for family members, or when a person touches the diapers of their infected child.
- Avoid drinking contaminated beverages or items that belong to an active case and then placing your hands near or in the mouth. (22)
- Infection may occur through contaminated drinking water, especially if it is stored in improperly cleaned water containers with feces from an infected person. (7)
- The hepatitis A virus is also transmitted by the fecal-oral route; that is when an uninfected person ingests food or water that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person. (7) In this way, they can spread through dirty hands when an infected person prepares or handles food for family members, or when a person touches the diapers of their infected child.
- The virus can also be transmitted through close physical contact with an infected person, although casual contact among people does not spread the virus. (17)
- Hepatitis A is usually 14 to 28 days. Symptoms range from mild to severe and can include fever, malaise, loss of appetite, diarrhea, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark-colored urine and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes). (8)

- Hepatitis A is a very contagious, and people can spread the virus well before they feel sick. (14)
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- Breastfeeding your child is safe in case of Hepatitis A infection is active with either mother or child, as long as strict hygiene practices are adhered to, in order to avoid cross-contamination. (18)

How is it Transmitted?

- Hepatitis A is transmitted from caring for someone who is ill or using drugs with others. (21)
- Hepatitis A can also be transmitted by the fecal-oral route; that is when an uninfected person ingests food or water that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person. (7) In this way, they can spread through dirty hands when an infected person prepares or handles food for family members, or when a person touches the diapers of their infected child.
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