

Tuesday, 17 May 2022

Health Protection



Since January 2022, an increase in the number of children with acute (sudden onset) hepatitis has been detected in the UK. Most of these children are under 10 years old.

Hepatitis is a condition involving inflammation of the liver and may occur for a number of reasons, including several viral infections. In the recently affected children, the viruses that normally cause hepatitis (hepatitis viruses A to E) have not been found. To date, other possible causes of acute hepatitis, including some medications and toxins, have not been identified either but are also being investigated (see more below). The Public Health Agency (PHA) is working with the UK Health Security Agency, NHS and other public health colleagues across the UK to identify the cause as soon as possible.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis?

Hepatitis symptoms include:

- yellowing of the white part of the eyes or skin (jaundice)
see www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/jaundice
- dark urine
- pale, grey-coloured faeces (poo)
- itchy skin
- muscle and joint pain
- a high temperature
- feeling and being sick
- feeling unusually tired all the time
- loss of appetite
- tummy pain

If your child is unwell, develops jaundice (yellowing of the eyes or skin), or is getting worse and/or you are worried about them, you should contact your GP or other healthcare professional, GP out-of-hours or your nearest Emergency Department.

What age group is most at risk?

Almost all of the children identified in the UK have been under 10 years of age, with most aged between 2 and 5 years. Most children affected were previously healthy, and only a very small number are linked to another case of hepatitis. This means that even if there has been someone with hepatitis among your family or friends, or at your child's nursery or school, your child is still at low risk.

What is causing the increase in acute hepatitis in children?

As the usual causes of infectious hepatitis have not been found in the recent cases in children, public health teams are looking at all other possible causes. Some of the children have tested positive for adenovirus, and therefore this is being considered, along with other possible causes.

What is adenovirus infection?

Adenoviruses are a family of very common viruses that cause a range of mild illnesses such as colds, vomiting, and diarrhoea. Adenovirus infections are very common in young children, and while they don't typically cause hepatitis, it can be a very rare complication of some types of adenovirus infection.

This factsheet for parents describes the recent increase in cases in acute (sudden onset) of hepatitis (liver inflammation) in children in the UK. The cause of this increase is currently unknown but possible causes are being investigated. The factsheet outlines symptoms to watch out for and what to do.

Details

Format

A4 2 sides PDF only

Target group

Parents

Downloads

Attachment	Size
Hepatitis in children factsheet A4 2pp 05_22 updated.pdf	191.99 KB

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