

1/15/2020

*\* NOTICE: This health alert provides written guidance for health care professionals and others who may need to take action to prevent or control a notifiable condition. It is not intended to provide guidance for the general public.*

### ***Hepatitis A Virus Outbreaks Continue among Persons Experiencing Homelessness and Persons who use Drugs***

**Over the past 6 weeks, 3 acute hepatitis A cases with ties to Thurston County were reported. Attempts to locate the individuals by multiple local health jurisdictions have been unsuccessful. Raise your index of suspicion when seeing individuals with symptoms of hepatitis.**

#### **Action Requested:**

- Consider hepatitis A as a diagnosis in anyone with jaundice and clinically compatible symptoms; fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, and/or joint pain.
- Exclude individuals you suspect or confirm as having hepatitis A from food handling, working in child care or healthcare, or attending school or child care until diarrhea resolves and it is 7 days from onset of jaundice, unless other restrictions apply.
- Collect information about where the individual lives, works and/or attends school.
- Encourage persons exposed to hepatitis A who are not immune to receive a dose of single-antigen hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG) as soon as possible, **within 2 weeks after exposure**. See below for additional details on post-exposure prophylaxis.
- Encourage hepatitis A vaccination for persons experiencing homelessness and for persons who report drug use or other risk factors for hepatitis A.
  - One dose of single-antigen hepatitis A vaccine has been shown to control outbreaks of hepatitis A and provides up to 95% seroprotection in healthy individuals for up to 11 years.
  - Pre-vaccination serologic testing is not required to administer hepatitis A vaccine. Vaccinations should not be postponed if vaccination history cannot be obtained or records are unavailable.
- **Report suspect and confirmed** cases to the local health department within 24 hours.
- Contact the health department to determine if it is necessary to save serum samples for additional testing to assist public health officials in the investigation of transmission.

Routine hepatitis A vaccination (2 doses at least 6 months apart) is recommended at any medical encounter for the following:

- All children at age 1 year or older
- Persons who are at increased risk for infection:
  - Persons traveling to or working in countries that have high or intermediate endemicity of hepatitis A;
  - Men who have sex with men;
  - Persons who use injection and non-injection drugs;
  - Persons experiencing homelessness;
  - Persons who have occupational risk for infection;
  - Persons who have chronic liver disease;
  - Persons who have clotting-factor disorders;
  - Household members and other close personal contacts or adopted children newly arriving from countries with high or intermediate hepatitis A endemicity; and
  - Persons having direct contact with persons who have hepatitis A.
- Persons who are at increased risk for complications from hepatitis A, including people with chronic liver diseases, such as hepatitis B or hepatitis C.
- Any person wishing to obtain immunity.

1/15/2020

Post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is recommended for susceptible persons who have been exposed to hepatitis A virus in the last 2 weeks; individuals with evidence of previous vaccination or infection do not require PEP. Post exposure prophylaxis includes:

- Hepatitis A vaccine for people aged  $\geq 12$  months, and/or
- Immune globulin (IG) for specific populations

Guidelines for post-exposure prophylaxis vary by age and health status and are available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/havfaq.htm#general>

### **Background**

Since 2016, several large outbreaks of hepatitis A have been identified in the U.S. that have involved, more than 30,000 cases, 18,271 (61%) hospitalizations, and 304 deaths from 30 states. Many of these cases have occurred among persons experiencing homelessness and/or persons who use drugs. The outbreak in Washington started in April of 2019 and was declared statewide in July of 2019. During April 2019 through January 9, 2020, 167 cases, 94 (56%) hospitalizations, and 3 deaths have been reported.

#### **HEPATITIS A**

- Transmission: Primarily person-to-person through a fecal-oral route.
- Symptoms: Fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain, and jaundice.
- Incubation period: Averages 28 days, but up to 50 days after exposure.
- Infectious period: virus in stool for two weeks prior to becoming symptomatic until a week after jaundice onset, making identifying exposures difficult.
- Outcome: When it affects populations with already poor health (e.g., hepatitis B and C infections, chronic liver disease), infection can lead to serious outcomes, including death.
- Prevention: Hepatitis A vaccination.

Large outbreaks of hepatitis A virus in persons who use drugs has not been seen in the US since the adoption of the recommendation for hepatitis A vaccination of persons who use injection and non-injection drugs in 1996. Outbreaks of hepatitis A infections among persons experiencing homelessness were not described in the US until 2016. Person-to-person transmission between persons who report drug use and/or homelessness can result from contaminated needles and other injection paraphernalia, sexual contact and practices, and from generally poor sanitary conditions. Transience, economic instability, limited access to healthcare, distrust of public officials and messages, and the lack of contact information for follow-up makes it difficult to reach the population and provide preventive services such as vaccination, sterile injection equipment, and case management and contact tracing. These challenges make outbreaks among these groups difficult to control once they start.

### **Local Efforts**

Since late 2018, the Olympia Free Medical Clinic, Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department - Housing, Disease Control and Prevention, Medical Reserve Corp, and Providence Community Care Clinic have partnered in outreach activities offering hepatitis A vaccinations to persons experiencing homelessness, persons who use drugs, and individuals serving these populations.

### **Adult Vaccine Program through the WA ST Department of Health**

The Washington State Adult Vaccine Program provides vaccine for adults 19 years of age and older who are uninsured or underinsured. The program is funded using 317 Federal Funding. Subject to funding, selected vaccine is available for providers to order for a limited time once each year. The vaccines offered change from year to year. If you serve the target population, information about how to obtain hepatitis A vaccine is available at:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/Adult/AdultVaccineProgram>



1/15/2020

**Resources:**

CDC Hepatitis A Outbreaks - <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/2017March-HepatitisA.htm>

CDC Vaccine Recommendations for Outbreaks - <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/InterimOutbreakGuidance-HAV-VaccineAdmin.htm>

CDC General Hepatitis Information - <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm>

DOH Notifiable Conditions and Posters - <https://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/NotifiableConditions/ListofNotifiableConditions>

CDC Updated Dosing Instructions for Immune Globulin (Human) GamaSTAN S/D for Hepatitis A Virus Prophylaxis - <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6636a5.htm>

CDC Hepatitis A Outbreak Resources - [https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/2017March-HepatitisA.htm?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fhepatitis%2Fhepaoutbreak%2Findex.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/2017March-HepatitisA.htm?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fhepatitis%2Fhepaoutbreak%2Findex.htm)

WA State DOH Hepatitis A Information - <https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/DiseasesandVaccines/HepatitisADisease/HepatitisAOutbreak>

WA State DOH Adult Vaccine Program Information - <https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/Adult/AdultVaccineProgram>

**THANK YOU FOR REPORTING - WE COULD NOT DO THIS WORK WITHOUT YOU**

TO REPORT A NOTIFIABLE CONDITION IN THURSTON COUNTY	
Voice mail for reporting <b>non-immediately reportable conditions (24 hours a day)</b>	Phone: 360-786-5470 Fax: 360-867-2601
<b>Day time immediately reportable conditions</b> – Call detailed information to the 24-hour Notifiable Condition Reporting Line at 360-786-5470. Messages are picked up hourly. If a call back can't wait call 360-867-2500 and ask staff to locate a Communicable Disease staff.	Phone: 360-786-5470
<b>After hours immediately and 24-hour reportable conditions or a public health emergency</b>	Call 911 and ask staff to locate the Administrator-On-Call.
No one is available with Thurston County Public Health and condition is <b>immediately notifiable</b>	1-877-539-4344

Communicable Disease Updates are posted online at: <http://bit.ly/CDUpdatePHSS>