



COLUMBUS PUBLIC HEALTH...
PROTECTING HEALTH, IMPROVING LIVES.

HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK UPDATE

The Situation:

Between January 2017 and April 2018, there have been hepatitis A outbreaks with more than 2,500 cases in multiple states including West Virginia, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, and Ohio has just declared an outbreak. Columbus Public Health (CPH) has activated the Incident Command Structure (ICS) to initiate prevention measures in the community.

About Hepatitis A:

Hepatitis A is a viral illness that affects the liver and causes fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain and jaundice. Symptoms usually appear within 2-6 weeks after being exposed. The virus leaves the body through stool (poop) and is transmitted primarily person-to-person through the fecal-oral route. It is not spread by kissing, sneezing or saliva.

Who's at Risk:

While anyone can get hepatitis A, major risk factors are IV drug use (IVDU)/drug use, men who have sex with men (MSM) and homelessness. However hepatitis A can also be spread through food if your facility has an ill food worker.

How to Prevent It:

There is a vaccine to prevent hepatitis A. CPH will be offering the vaccine at various sites in the community to individuals at high risk of infection. Thorough hand washing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds after using the restroom and before preparing and eating food also is important in preventing the spread of hepatitis A. Clean and sanitize surfaces often in your facility especially in the dining areas to keep hepatitis A from spreading due to customers bringing it into the facility.

What CPH is Doing:

CPH is providing educational materials and outreach -- as well as vaccine -- for those at high risk (IVDU, MSM, homeless). We will continue to monitor cases of hepatitis A in the community and keep you informed. We are also asking community partners to help by encouraging vaccination and providing education on hepatitis A to at-risk employees.

What We Want Partners to Do:

CPH is asking our community partners to help us by encouraging the vaccine and providing education on hepatitis A to at-risk (IVDU/drug use, MSM, homeless) employees. If you or your agency has any questions regarding hepatitis A, please contact Beth Wilson at emwilson@columbus.gov or Emerald Hernandez at ELHernandez@columbus.gov. If an employee has questions, please have them call the CPH Infectious Disease Nurse Line at (614)-645-1474 option 3.

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