



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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COMMUNICABLE DISEASE UNIT

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

To:	All Healthcare Providers
From:	Arnold S. Leff, MD, REHS, County Public Health Officer
Date:	May 11, 2017
Subject:	Hepatitis A Virus Outbreak in Santa Cruz County

**Above Average Incidence of Acute Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) Infection – 2017
Request for vigilance in case recognition and reporting
Recommendation for prophylactic vaccination against HAV**

Current situation:

Santa Cruz County has experienced a higher than average number of acute Hepatitis A virus infection cases over the past month. These newly identified cases share one or more of the following characteristics: illicit drug use (injection and non-injection), homelessness, and/or dense living conditions. Of concern is the fact that there have been recent, serious and widespread outbreaks of Hepatitis A in similar identified populations in other counties.

Santa Cruz County Public Health officials are concerned that some of our community's most vulnerable members are currently at increased risk due to shared activities and living conditions.

Background:

Hepatitis A is a highly infectious liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus (HAV) which multiplies in the liver and is shed in the feces. Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable illness that can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months and even death.

HAV is usually spread when a person ingests fecal matter—even in microscopic amounts—from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by feces or stool from an infected person.

Those at increased risk for HAV infection include: travelers to areas with high or intermediate rates of endemic HAV; men who have sex with men; users of injection and non-injection illegal drugs, persons with clotting factor disorders; and persons working with nonhuman primates. HAV outbreaks have been reported among the homeless, who have a higher morbidity and mortality when compared with the general population and an increased risk of infection due to living conditions.

Action Steps:

CASE RECOGNITION:

- **Consider HAV infection in individuals** – especially the homeless and those who use illicit drugs, with discrete onset of symptoms, and jaundice or elevated liver function tests. Symptoms of concern include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia, fever, malaise, dark urine, light-colored stool, and abdominal pain. A complete viral hepatitis serology panel is recommended in symptomatic patients. Serologic testing for HAV infection is not recommended in asymptomatic individuals or as screening before vaccination.

CASE REPORTING:

- **Clinicians should promptly report confirmed and suspect cases** of HAV to Santa Cruz County Public Health / Communicable Disease Unit (CDU) via fax to **(831) 454-5049** using the Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) found here:
<http://www.santacruzhealth.org/Portals/7/Pdfs/PH%20Reporting/cdph110a.pdf>
 - Copies of pertinent laboratory testing results and clinical notes should be included.
 - **Collection of contact information and travel history is of utmost importance.**

VACCINATION and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis:

- Provide post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for close contacts of confirmed HAV cases. Susceptible people exposed to HAV should receive a dose of single-antigen HAV vaccine or intramuscular (IM) immune globulin (IG) (0.02 mL/kg), or both, as soon as possible within 2 weeks of last exposure. The efficacy of combined HAV/Hepatitis B virus (HBV) vaccine for PEP has not been evaluated, so it is not recommended for PEP. Detailed information on PEP may be found on the CDPH Hepatitis A Postexposure Prophylaxis Guidance Quicksheet (updated August 2016):
https://archive.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/CDPH_HAV%20PEP%20Clinical%20Guidance.pdf
- For those who are not acutely ill vaccination against HAV is recommended. The combined HAV/HBV (Twinrix®) vaccine may be used if the individual is not already immune to HBV. Providers who do not have available vaccine should contact County Public Health at the number below for further guidance.

For more information:

- <https://archive.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/CDPHHAVQuicksheet.pdf>
- <https://archive.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/FoodborneHepatitisAFactSheet.pdf>

If you have questions or information regarding possible cases please call the Public Health Department Communicable Disease Unit at (831) 454-4114.

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.



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Santa Cruz County