



Public Health Health Advisory

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Date: April 3, 2019

To: Hospital Emergency Departments, Hospital Infection Perfectionists, Hospital Administrators and all Medical Providers in San Bernardino County

From: Maxwell Ohikhuare, MD
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Subject: San Bernardino County Hepatitis A Increase and use of Hepatitis A Vaccine for At Risk Patients and Health Care Personnel

San Bernardino County is currently experiencing an increase of hepatitis A (HAV) infections among persons experiencing homelessness and/or using illicit drugs in addition to men who have sex with men (MSM). The Department of Public Health urges all medical providers to strongly recommend and administer hepatitis A vaccination to individuals in these high risk populations including those who are admitted to the hospital or are visiting the emergency department. Offering vaccinations in these settings is crucial to improving vaccination opportunities of at-risk individuals.

Hepatitis A vaccine is the best way to prevent HAV infection. While hepatitis A vaccine is now recommended as part of the routine childhood vaccination schedule, most adults have not been vaccinated and may be susceptible to hepatitis A infection.

Actions Requested for ALL Healthcare Providers from the Public Health Officer:

- Assess high risk populations for potential signs of HAV infection. The following groups are at highest risk for acquiring HAV infection or developing serious complications from HAV infection: **homeless, injection or non-injection drug users, MSM, those with chronic liver disease including cirrhosis, hepatitis B or hepatitis C, and those who are or were recently incarcerated.**
- Use Standing Orders to ensure vaccination of the identified at-risk populations (Standing Orders sample provided).
- Identify and immediately vaccinate non-HAV-immune patients who are considered high risk. 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.
- Suspect acute hepatitis A in homeless and/or drug-users and/or MSM who present with consistent symptoms (abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, fever, jaundice and

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significant elevation in LFTs). Confirm by obtaining a complete viral hepatitis serology panel.

- **Promptly report all suspect and confirmed HAV cases to the Communicable Disease Section within 24 hours** by calling (800) 722-4794 or faxing a [CMR](#) to (909) 387-6377. After hours, call (909) 356-3805. This will facilitate immediate investigation by a communicable disease investigator and timely provision of prophylaxis to contacts.
- [Follow standard environmental sanitation protocols](#) to prevent the spread infectious diseases. HAV is best killed by cleaning household or other facility surfaces with a freshly prepared solution of 1:100 dilution of household bleach to water.
- [Educate patients](#) regarding HAV infection including: prevention, transmission and symptoms.

Thank you for your help in preventing the spread of hepatitis A infection. For more information please contact the Communicable Disease Section at 1-800-722-4794, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.