



NEWS RELEASE

Public Health

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Hepatitis A cluster in San Bernardino County

San Bernardino County continues to experience an increase in the number of reported hepatitis A cases. Between Jan. 1 and July 1, 2019 15 hepatitis A cases have been identified among county residents. During the same time period in 2018, two hepatitis A cases were reported.

Cases are predominantly occurring among the high-risk populations such as drug users and individuals experiencing homelessness. Hepatitis A outbreaks began in San Diego County in 2017-2018 and were associated with the same at-risk population. Although the outbreak in San Diego County has subsided, clusters continue to occur nationwide. Preventive measures are to be considered for individuals traveling out of state or for those in contact with high-risk populations.

To prevent hepatitis A infection, the following is recommended:

- Receive two doses of hepatitis A vaccine, if not previously vaccinated.
- Do not have sex with an individual infected with the hepatitis A virus.
- Do not share towels, toothbrush and eating utensils with other individuals.
- Do not share food, drinks or cigarettes with other individuals.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, changing diapers and before preparing and/or eating food.

The majority of alcohol-based hand sanitizers are effective against bacteria, but not as effective in killing viruses, such as hepatitis A virus. Non-alcohol based hand sanitizers can be effective against this virus. Proper hand washing with soap and water is strongly encouraged when possible.

Hepatitis A is an acute viral infection that affects the liver. Person-to-person transmission of hepatitis A virus among individuals who report drug use and/or homelessness could result from contaminated needles and other injection equipment, specific sexual contact and practices, or from poor sanitary conditions.

This virus typically spreads through fecal-oral route and causes symptoms such as fatigue, poor appetite, fever and nausea. Hepatitis A can become a serious illness and individuals experiencing similar symptoms are encouraged to contact their healthcare provider.

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.

