



HEALTH ADVISORY

Public Health

CONTACT:

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Hepatitis A Prevention and Recommendations

San Bernardino County is currently experiencing an outbreak of hepatitis A (HAV) infections among persons experiencing homelessness and/or using illicit drugs (both intravenous and non-intravenous). Cases are clustered in the cities of Redlands and San Bernardino.

"All medical providers are urged 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," stated Assistant Health Officer Dr. Erin Gustafson. "Offering vaccinations in these settings is crucial to improving vaccination rates 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 Providers:

- 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 user, men who have sex with men (MSM), those with chronic liver disease including cirrhosis, hepatitis B or hepatitis C, and those who are incarcerated.
- Identify and immediately vaccinate high risk patients who do not report being previously vaccinated or having past hepatitis A infection. 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 consistent symptoms (e.g. abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, fever, jaundice and significant elevation in Liver Function Tests (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 the [CMR report](#) to (909) 387-6377. For after-hours, call (909) 356-3805. This will facilitate immediate interview by a communicable disease investigator and timely provision of prophylaxis to contacts.
- [Follow standard environmental sanitation protocols](#) to prevent the spread infectious diseases, including HAV.
- [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 (800) 722-4794, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

