



Disease Control and Epidemiology

Hepatitis A Outbreaks in Homeless Populations in California

June 22, 2017

As of June 20, 2017, San Diego County has had 181 cases of hepatitis A, including 4 deaths, reported since early 2017, primarily in homeless and/or illicit drug user populations. Santa Cruz County has also reported 12 cases of hepatitis A mainly in their homeless and/or illicit drug user population in the last two months.

Three cases of hepatitis A virus (HAV) infection have been diagnosed in Orange County residents in the last month. The cases are adult males aged 32-57 years, none with a history of travel or other apparent hepatitis A exposure. Illness onset dates ranged from May 2 to May 26. A common source for these infections has not been identified; the Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA) is investigating the situation. In general, 15-25 cases of hepatitis A infection are reported annually in Orange County, the vast majority following exposure either during international travel or to a known case of hepatitis A. **None of the recently identified Orange County cases have a connection to the outbreaks in San Diego or Santa Cruz, but cases of hepatitis A associated with these events may occur in Orange County at any time.**

Recommendations

Given the outbreaks currently occurring in multiple homeless populations in California, OCHCA is recommending that all homeless persons in Orange County aged one (1) year or older receive hepatitis A vaccination.

- Utilize standard hepatitis A vaccination administration, dosage and interval recommendations based on age and product, as provided by the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) (<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/havfaq.htm#vaccine>).
- Consult the OCHCA Health Referral Line 1-800-564-8448 for locations of hepatitis A vaccination clinics to refer your homeless patients to if you do not have vaccine available.
- Continue routine hepatitis A vaccination of the general population, including all children at one year of age as well as persons with high risk conditions or behaviors including: illicit drug users, men who have sex with men, persons who work or travel to countries with high rates of hepatitis A, those with chronic liver disease or clotting disorders, and anyone who works with HAV-infected primates or with HAV in a research setting.

Testing and Reporting

- Consider HAV infection in persons with signs and/or symptoms of hepatitis, including jaundice, dark urine, pale stool, fever, malaise, anorexia, nausea, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or increased transaminases (AST/ALT).
- Send serum for HAV IgM testing in all suspect hepatitis A patients.
- Report any suspect or confirmed hepatitis A patients promptly to Orange County Public Health Epidemiology by phone at 714-834-8180 or by fax at 714-564-4050.

Additional Prevention Measures

- Advise any suspect or confirmed hepatitis A patients to refrain from food preparation for others and stay home from work if in a sensitive occupation (food service, health care, or child care) for at least one week after jaundice onset or symptom onset (if no jaundice), whichever is later. Public Health will advise persons in sensitive occupations when they can return to work.
- Administer post-exposure prophylaxis to any susceptible (non-immune) close personal contacts of persons with hepatitis A as soon as possible within two weeks of last exposure to the case. For more information, see https://archive.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/CDPH_HAV%20PEP%20Clinical%20Guidance.pdf.