



Health Alert



Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Chicago Health Alert Network

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Guidance for Emergency Department physicians to prevent further spread of Hepatitis A in Chicago

Background: Hepatitis A outbreaks among homeless populations have recently occurred in California, Michigan, and Utah. These infections have had high rates of hospitalization and death. So far in 2017, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) has confirmed 28 hepatitis A cases, with a median age of 33 years (range 21-62 years). Twenty-one (75%) have been male; 10 of the 21 identifying as men who have sex with men (MSM). Six (21%) reported injection drug use (IDU), and since September of 2017, 4 (14%) have been homeless. Proportions of these high risk groups are higher than in previous years and match the high-risk groups affected in ongoing outbreaks across the country. Hospitalization has occurred in 50% of Chicago cases and there have been no deaths. Given the epidemiology of clusters and individual cases of hepatitis A in Chicago, high-risk groups for hepatitis A are currently defined as:

- Homeless/transiently-housed/unstably-housed individuals
- Injection drug users
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)

Prevention: In the setting of national outbreaks of hepatitis A, we need your help to quickly identify and prevent the spread of this highly contagious disease.

- **If any individuals in the above high-risk groups present to the Emergency Department:**
 - Consider offering hepatitis A vaccine as a preventive measure and record the dose of hepatitis A vaccine in I-CARE (Illinois Comprehensive Automated Immunization Registry Exchange).
 - Discuss frequent and diligent handwashing, specifically using soap and water for at least 20 seconds (*alcohol hand sanitizer does not kill hepatitis A*).
 - Consider offering a hygiene kit to homeless individuals that includes soap and a towel as a conversation starter (contact below to request kits to distribute).
- **If any individuals in the above high-risk groups present to the Emergency Department with jaundice, scleral icterus or elevated liver enzymes:**
 - Send serum hepatitis IgM and have the lab save the specimen for 30 days.
 - Report clinical suspicion to CDPH Communicable Disease Hepatitis Surveillance at (phone) 312-746-6197; (fax) 312-746-6388.
 - Attempt to collect the following information and document in the medical record so if the individual is confirmed hepatitis A IgM positive, we can quickly determine appropriate settings for post-exposure prophylaxis of contacts.
 - All contact information including alternate phone numbers and alternate addresses. If no address can be provided, please attempt to obtain cross streets of the encampment/shelter/rehab/detox/needle exchange/congregate living facility where the patient will go if and when discharged.

Contact: For additional information or questions please contact Immunization Program Medical Director Marielle Fricchione, MD at 312-746-5382 or marielle.fricchione@cityofchicago.org or Communicable Diseases Medical Director Stephanie Black, MD at 312-746-6034 or stephanie.black@cityofchicago.org. To report confirmed cases of hepatitis A, please contact Communicable Disease Hepatitis Surveillance at (phone) 312-746-6197; (fax) 312-746-6388. Call Maritza Vazquez-Perez at 312-746-0304 to receive hygiene kits for distribution.

Additional information and educational resources are available at www.cityofchicago.org/HepatitisA.