

CHICAGO HEPATITIS A RESPONSE TASKFORCE

Chicago Department of Public Health – Immunization Program

Issue Number 1 : December 2018

We are pleased to announce the first issue of the CHART Update Newsletter to keep you aware of emerging HAV outbreak related information.

In This Issue

- Outbreak of Hepatitis A Virus Among Persons Who Use Drugs and Persons Experiencing Homelessness
- Chicago Area Hepatitis A Cases
- Illinois Officially Declares Hepatitis A Outbreak
- Chicago's Hepatitis A Prevention Strategy
- ACIP Recommendations

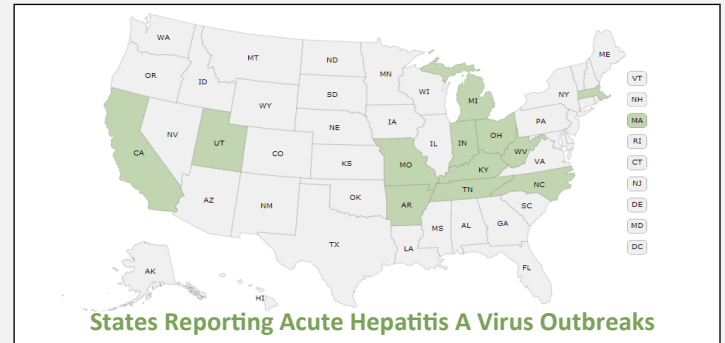
HAV Quick Fact

HAV can live outside the body for months, depending on the environmental conditions and it can take 15-50 days for symptoms to develop once infected.

Outbreak of Hepatitis A Virus Among Persons Who Use Drugs and Persons Experiencing Homelessness

From January 2017 to November 2018 the CDC received reports of over 8,500 cases¹ of acute hepatitis A virus (HAV) infection in [13 states](#); the majority of these cases were identified in individuals reporting injection or non-injection drug use, homelessness, and/or men who have sex with men (MSM).

Of special note, states reporting cases associated with this outbreak have had increased rates of hospitalization ranging from 52 - 86%¹, and deaths ranging from 1 - 3%², which is thought to be associated with comorbidities among these high-risk groups, including preexisting liver conditions.



Chicago Area Hepatitis A Cases

Chicago has seen an average of 19 cases of acute HAV annually over the last five years. In 2017, thirty-four cases of HAV were identified, almost double the average annual number of cases. While in previous years, the majority of cases were associated with international travel, in 2017 the predominant risk factors were MSM (55.6%), homelessness (14.7%), and intravenous drug use (IVDU) (17.7%), aligning with risk factors identified in other national outbreaks. Four of those cases were determined to be associated with preexisting outbreaks and an additional 15 were MSM and are now being considered outbreak associated. So far in 2018, CDPH has received reports of 24 cases, only 2 of which identified as MSM though unrelated to the current cluster in East-Central Illinois. Though currently in 2018, there are no outbreak associated cases in Chicago, we need to invigorate our Hepatitis A response now to prevent transmission in Chicago's high-risk communities. Provider recommendations are posted at: www.chicagohan.org/HepA and educational resources for the public are available at www.cityofchicago.org/HepatitisA.

Illinois Officially Declares Hepatitis A Outbreak

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has identified 17 outbreak associated cases to date statewide, with a cluster of cases identified in the Champaign region in November. The majority of cases have been identified in MSM populations, though some also identified as illicit drug users, or both. In addition, the overall number of cases among at-risk populations has started to increase, with cases confirmed to be associated with strains that are currently circulating in other national outbreaks. Consequently, as of December 13, 2018, [IDPH formally declared an HAV outbreak in Illinois](#). Outbreak associated cases include those individuals with confirmed HAV infection and any of the following risk factors: men who have sex with men (MSM), illicit drug use (both IV and non-IV), or homeless/insecure housing, and/or determined to be infected with the known circulating HAV outbreak strains. For updated IDPH case counts visit: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/hepatitisA>.

Now that Illinois has officially reached outbreak threshold, it is increasingly important that hepatitis A vaccinations are made easily available to at-risk populations. For those individuals who are unable to afford vaccination, CDPH has partnered with [Howard Brown Health Centers](#) to serve as walk-in referral sites for hepatitis A vaccination. It is essential that we continue to work together in our efforts to prevent the further spread of this disease in Chicago.

1. Foster, Monique. "Case Counts-Hepatitis A Virus Outbreak Among Persons Who Report Drug Use and/or Homelessness—Multiple States." Call #16. Multistate Hepatitis A Virus Outbreak, 20 Nov. 2018, Atlanta, Georgia.

2. Morris, Sapna Bamrah, et al. "Hepatitis A Outbreaks in Multiple States: CDC Recommendations and Guidance." Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA). COCA Calls, 29 Nov. 2018, Atlanta, Georgia.

Chicago's Hepatitis A Prevention Strategy

In early September 2017, Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) identified its first cases of HAV in homeless individuals. Due to similarities with other ongoing HAV outbreaks, CDPH reacted by initiating an incident command structure to quickly reduce further spread of this highly contagious virus. The Immunization, Communicable Disease, and Emergency Preparedness programs, along with several community partners, established the Chicago Hepatitis A Response Taskforce (CHART) and worked together to clearly define, educate, and vaccinate at-risk populations, as well as identify and encourage reporting of suspected HAV cases.

To date CDPH has distributed 2,930 doses of hepatitis A vaccine to its 11 partners, and together they have administered 2,049 doses to individuals in at-risk populations. Recognizing the importance of patient education and behavior change on prevention efforts, CDPH has also provided educational materials including palm cards, posters, health alerts, and Hep A fact sheets. These materials were also made available on the [CDPH Website](#), and distributed using the [Health Alert Network](#) (HAN). Environmental cleaning guidance, hand-washing guidance, special guidance to food handlers and infrequent (holiday) volunteers, and hygiene kits donated by Blue Cross Blue Shield of IL (BCBS) were also provided. In total, CDPH distributed 616 posters, 29,910 palm-cards, and 6,121 hygiene kits to shelters, STD/HIV clinics, warming centers, hospitals, ERs, pharmacies, Infection Control units, methadone clinics, needle exchanges, TB program, Detox units, outreach mobile units, churches, and the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services' (DFSS) annual homeless count.



ACIP Recommendations for Hepatitis A Vaccination

Vaccination with the full, two dose series of hepatitis A vaccine is the most reliable way to prevent hepatitis A virus infection. Even one dose provides nearly 95% immunity for over 10 years and has been shown to prevent HAV outbreaks.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that the following persons be vaccinated against hepatitis A:

- All children \geq age 1 year (universal childhood vaccination)
- Persons who are at increased risk for infection,
- Persons who are at increased risk for complications from hepatitis A, and
- Any person wishing to obtain immunity (protection).

Persons at Increased Risk for Hepatitis A Infection Includes:

- Men who have sex with men
- Users of injection and non-injection drugs
- [Recently, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\) voted unanimously to add "homelessness" as a routine indication for HAV vaccination](#)
- Travelers
- Persons with clotting-factor disorders
- Persons who work with nonhuman primates
- Persons who anticipate close personal contact with an international adoptee
- Persons with chronic liver disease

Recommendation for Hepatitis A Post-Exposure Prophylaxis

Hepatitis A vaccine is the preferred method of post-exposure prophylaxis for individuals age 12 months to 40 years of age who have recently been exposed to HAV and have not been previously vaccinated. A single dose of Hep A vaccine should be given as soon as possible after exposure. Contact CDPH at ChicagoVFC@cityofchicago.org and call 312-746-5382 during business hours or 311 on evenings and weekends if you need help coordinating post-exposure vaccination.

For individuals over 40 years of age, immunoglobulin (IG) can be administered within two weeks of exposure, though Hep A vaccine may be given if it is not available. IG should also be used for both [pre and post-exposure prophylaxis](#) in children under the age of 12 months, immunocompromised individuals, people with chronic liver disease or other at-risk medical conditions, and for individuals for whom vaccine is contraindicated.

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Requests for Hep A educational materials, please contact:

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312-746-6286
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Also Available Online at:

www.cityofchicago.org/HepatitisA

Requests for Hepatitis A vaccine, please contact:

ChicagoVFC@cityofchicago.org

CHART Partners, please enter all Hep A doses into ICARE when possible and submit all publicly funded doses administered using the Vaccination Event Report Forms to:

vaccine@cityofchicago.org

HAV Resources

[CDPH Hepatitis A Information Page](#)

[CDPH Health Alert Network](#)

[CDC Hepatitis A Information Page](#)

[CDC Hepatitis A Health Advisory](#)

