
HEALTH BULLETIN

Hepatitis A Virus Outbreak Among Homeless and Illicit Drug Using Populations in California

October 26, 2017

SITUATION:

Multiple counties in California, including Los Angeles, San Diego, and Santa Cruz, are experiencing an outbreak of Hepatitis A virus (HAV). **There have been no confirmed cases of HAV in Kern County to date this year;** however providers should maintain a high index of suspicion in patients with clinically-compatible illness.

While most cases have been found among persons who are homeless and/or use illicit (injection and noninjection) drugs, other cases have occurred in persons with no known association to those groups. Both healthcare workers and food handlers have been identified in the outbreak, though no secondary cases have been reported in connection with these sensitive occupations.

Vaccination and hand hygiene with soap and water are the best prevention against HAV. On October 13, 2017 Governor Brown declared a State of Emergency to increase supply of HAV vaccine and ordered the California Department of Public Health to prioritize adult HAV vaccination for at-risk individuals in affected locations.

Pediatric HAV vaccine supply and recommendations are not affected by the current outbreak and recommendations for routine pediatric vaccination remain the same.

To date, there is no increased risk of HAV infection in the general population.

RECOMMENDATION:

Currently, no additional public health measures regarding HAV have been recommended for Kern County.

Due to the State of Emergency Proclamation, Kern County Public Health Services Department (KCPHSD) is requesting healthcare providers be judicious in the administration of adult HAV vaccine and prioritize vaccination for persons with the highest immediate risk of HAV infection or becoming severely ill if infected.

Healthcare providers are not considered at risk of HAV infection when routine infection control precautions are followed. KCPHSD encourages all adults to receive routinely recommended vaccinations and encourages healthcare providers to check their records to make sure they are up to date. Many healthcare providers are required to be vaccinated for Hepatitis B virus and may have received HAV at the same time (Twinrix).

KCPHSD always recommends proper hand hygiene with soap and water. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are **not** effective against HAV.

KCPHSD always recommends healthcare facilities perform consistent environmental cleaning of patient care areas and restrooms. HAV can remain viable on environmental services for several weeks if not thoroughly

disinfected. Measures similar to disinfection for norovirus are recommended. Please refer to the Environmental Protection Agency's List of Registered of Antimicrobial Products Effective Against Norovirus (<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2017-07/documents/20171207.listg.pdf>). If used, chlorine bleach should be diluted to 5000 ppm (1 ²/₃ cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water).

KCPHSD continues to recommend routine immunization of children for HAV. Pediatric HAV vaccine supply and recommendations are not affected by this outbreak.

KCPHSD recommends all healthcare providers consider HAV infection in individuals with discrete symptom onset and jaundice or elevated liver function tests, particularly for persons in a high risk group. The incubation period for HAV infection ranges from 15 to 50 days with an average of 28 days. Most immunocompetent adults shed virus in stool and are infectious from two weeks before through one week after onset of jaundice or elevated liver enzymes. In the absence of jaundice, persons should be considered infectious from two weeks before through one week after the onset of hepatitis symptoms.

- Symptoms of HAV may include nausea, vomiting, anorexia, fever, malaise, dark urine, diarrhea, light-colored stool, and abdominal pain.
- A complete serology panel with testing for Hepatitis A, B, and C is recommended in **symptomatic** patients. HIV testing is also recommended for those with undocumented HIV-status.
- Serologic testing for HAV infection is **not** recommended in asymptomatic individuals or as screening before vaccination.

Any person potentially contagious with HAV should be counseled on preventing the spread of disease. In addition to appropriate hand hygiene, patients should be advised of appropriate environmental cleaning measures.

Please report all suspected and confirmed HAV cases to the KCPHSD **immediately**. Cases can be reported through any of the following ways:

- Submit electronically via CalREDIE
- Fax a confidential morbidity report (CMR) to (661) 868-0261
- Call KCPHSD at (661) 321-3000 and ask to speak to Disease Control

All healthcare providers are reminded of the importance of hand washing with soap and warm water before and after each patient contact.

If you have any questions, please contact KCPHSD at (661) 321-3000. Thank you for your commitment to the health of the community.

Sincerely,



Denise Smith, PHN, MPA
Director of Disease Control
for
Claudia Jonah, MD
Health Officer