



News From Cabell-Huntington Health Department (05-18-2018)

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CABELL COUNTY HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK UPDATE

HUNTINGTON, WV - Hepatitis A as a highly contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. It can range from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months. Although rare, hepatitis A can cause death in some people. Hepatitis A usually spreads when a person unknowingly ingests the virus from objects, food, or drinks contaminated by small, undetected amounts of stool from an infected person.(1)

People at higher risk of getting hepatitis A are:

- People with direct contact with someone who has hepatitis A
- Travelers to countries where hepatitis A is common
- Men who have sexual contact with men
- People who use drugs, both injection and non-injection drugs
- Household members or caregivers of a recent adoptee from countries where hepatitis A is common
- People with clotting factor disorders, such as hemophilia
- People working with nonhuman primates

Children under 6 who get hepatitis A often have mild or no symptoms.(2) Many children may be immune, because children have been routinely vaccinated for hepatitis A since 2006 and in West Virginia, the vaccine is required for prekindergarten attendance, but is not required at entry to public school.(3) Parents should review their children's immunization records to see if they have been immunized.

Older Children and Adults who have not had the disease in childhood or been vaccinated can get sick and typically have symptoms which start an average of 4 weeks, but can occur between 2 and 7 weeks after exposure. Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Clay-colored stools
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)

According to the CDC, the best way to prevent hepatitis A is through vaccination with the hepatitis A vaccine. To get the full benefit of the hepatitis A vaccine, more than one shot is needed. The number and timing of these shots depends on the type of vaccine you are given. Practicing good hand hygiene – including thoroughly washing hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food – plays an important role in preventing the spread of hepatitis A.(1)

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends hepatitis A vaccination for the following people:

- All children at age 1 year
- Travelers to countries where hepatitis A is common
- Family and caregivers of adoptees from countries where hepatitis A is common
- Men who have sexual encounters with other men
- Users of recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- People with chronic or long-term liver disease, including hepatitis B or hepatitis C
- People with clotting-factor disorders
- People with direct contact with others who have hepatitis A
- Any person wishing to obtain immunity (protection)

Cabell County is experiencing an increase in numbers of reported cases of hepatitis A, likely associated with a multistate outbreak of the disease. Working in conjunction with the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health, and with disease and outbreak-specific guidance, Cabell-Huntington Health Department has been identifying cases, case contacts and populations at risk for contracting hepatitis A. Education has been distributed to health care providers and the public regarding the disease, its route of transmission, its signs and symptoms, and availability of prevention measures. Prevention measures deployed include education regarding handwashing and hygiene, active immunization of case contacts, and campaigns to immunize designated high-risk populations including first responders and other workers with designated exposure risk.

The first Cabell County case in this outbreak was reported April 9, 2018

On May 11, the number of reported cases was 7.

As of May 18, the number of reported cases is 14.

More information regarding hepatitis A and this outbreak can be found at <https://www.cabellhealth.org/> or at <https://dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/Pages/default.aspx>

Updates regarding case numbers will be updated weekly on Fridays until the outbreak appears to have ended.

Changes in specific guidance will be issued as they develop.

References

- (1) <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/afaq.htm#overview>
- (2) <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/diseases/child/hepa.html>
- (3) <https://www.nvic.org/Vaccine-Laws/state-vaccine-requirements/westvirginia.aspx>