



PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY:

July 16, 2018

# Hepatitis A

From Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

## What you need to know

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and affected local health departments are investigating an increased number of hepatitis A cases in Ohio. On June 22, 2018 ODH declared a statewide community outbreak of hepatitis A after observing an increase in cases linked to certain risk factors. Ohio is reporting 119 hepatitis A cases associated with the outbreak so far this year -- almost double the number of cases reported during all of last year. Hepatitis A outbreaks are occurring in several states, including Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan and West Virginia. To date, there have been no cases linked to the outbreak in Franklin County.

## What to watch for

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable liver disease that usually spreads when a person ingests fecal matter - even in microscopic amounts - from contact with objects, food or drinks contaminated by the stool of an infected person. Hepatitis A can also be spread from close personal contact with an infected person, such as through sex.

Symptoms of hepatitis A, which include fatigue, decreased appetite, abdominal pain, nausea, clay-colored stools and jaundice, usually appear within 2-6 weeks after being exposed. People with hepatitis A can experience mild illness lasting a few weeks to severe illness lasting several months.

## What you can do

Hepatitis A vaccination of high risk populations has been important in stopping outbreaks and could be key to preventing an outbreak from occurring in Franklin County.

- Vaccinate your patients per ACIP recommendations.
- Vaccinate patients with chronic hepatitis B and C for hepatitis A. At least 1 in 5 patients diagnosed with hepatitis A in Ohio this year have been co-infected with hepatitis C.
- Ask about close contacts in the 14 days before jaundice onset. Close contacts include household contacts, sexual contacts, drug sharers, and childcare center staff and attendees.
- Ask about risk factors for acquiring infection including sexual contact, drug use, homelessness, and recent travel outside of Ohio.
- Use contact protections (e.g. gown, gloves) in addition to handwashing are recommended when providing care to patients who are diapered or incontinent for at least 10 days after jaundice onset. (Post-exposure prophylaxis is not routinely indicated for workers who have provided care for a patient with hepatitis A.)

**Report Cases:** Hepatitis A is a [reportable Class B disease](#) in Ohio. Infections must be reported by the end of the next business day. **Submit all reports via the Infectious Disease Reporting System (IDRS) by fax at (614) 525-8890 or call (614) 525-8888.**

## To learn more

**CDC Hepatitis A Questions and Answers for Health Professionals** - <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/havfaq.htm#E1>

**Prevention of Hepatitis A Through Active or Passive Immunization:** Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) - <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5507a1.htm>

**Ohio Department of Health Statewide Community Outbreak** - <https://www.odh.ohio.gov/hepa>

**Questions & Comments** - If you have any questions, call 614-645-1474 - opt 2.

## Who is at risk, who to screen and who to vaccinate

People at increased risk for hepatitis A in this outbreak include:

- People with direct contact with individuals infected with the virus.
- Men who have sex with men.
- People who use street drugs whether they are injected or not.
- People who are incarcerated.
- People experiencing homelessness.
- People who have traveled to other areas of the U.S. currently experiencing outbreaks.