

HEPATITIS A

Stopping Its Spread

Chester County Health Department
601 Westtown Road
West Chester, PA 19380
610-344-6252



PA is experiencing an outbreak of hepatitis A.

- Hepatitis A is a highly contagious, vaccine preventable infection caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). It is spread via fecal-oral route, and is clinically indistinguishable from infections caused by hepatitis B or hepatitis C viruses. The incubation period for hepatitis A is long, between 15 and 50 days. The average length of time between exposure and symptom onset is 28 days.
- Large nationwide outbreaks have caused over 8,000 hospitalizations and 236 deaths.
- There is an upward trend in outbreak-associated cases of hepatitis A in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Signs and Symptoms



Nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain



Jaundice, dark urine, and pale stools



Fever, fatigue, anorexia, and malaise

High-Risk Groups

These populations should be prioritized for vaccination efforts, and include:



Persons who use injection and/or non-injection drugs



Men who have sex with men (MSM)



Persons experiencing homelessness or unstable housing

Prevention Measures



Practice hand hygiene frequently using soap and water



Adhere to standard precautions in healthcare facilities



Screen and vaccinate individuals in high risk groups

DID YOU KNOW?

Hand sanitizer may not be effective against HAV. Washing hands with soap and water is the preferred way to keep hands free of HAV.



STOPPING THE SPREAD

Healthcare providers in Chester County play a major role in halting the spread of infectious disease, including HAV. By screening, vaccinating, and educating patients, you can put the brakes on the spread of HAV in our community.

Screening

These groups are at highest risk of HAV infection or developing serious complications:

1. People who use drugs (injection and non-injection).
2. Men who have sex with men.
3. Those experiencing homelessness and/or unstable housing.
4. People who are, or were recently, incarcerated.
5. People with chronic liver disease.

Vaccination to Control an Outbreak

Certain individuals qualify for no cost vaccine at the Health Department. Call for more information about the vaccine program at 610-344-6252.

Routine Vaccination

All individuals at risk for hepatitis A are recommended to get vaccinated, including:

- Children, who are routinely vaccinated between their first and second birthdays.
- Persons traveling to, or working in, countries with high or intermediate rates of hepatitis A.
- Persons who have occupational risk for infection.
- Persons who have chronic liver disease.
- Persons who have clotting-factor disorders.
- Household members and other close personal contacts of adopted children newly arriving from countries with high or intermediate rates of hepatitis A.
- Persons with direct contact with persons who have hepatitis A.