



HEALTH ADVISORY #149

Information for Healthcare Providers and Emergency Departments on the Hepatitis A Outbreak

TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and other Healthcare Facilities

**FROM: Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, MBA, FACP, Commissioner and State Health Officer
WVDHHR, Bureau for Public Health**

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LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY HEALTH PROVIDERS, HOSPITAL-BASED PHYSICIANS, INFECTION CONTROL PREVENTIONISTS, LABORATORY DIRECTORS, AND OTHER APPLICABLE PARTNERS

OTHER RECIPIENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ASSOCIATION MEMBERS, STAFF, ETC.

The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health (BPH) continues to investigate cases of hepatitis A as part of the multi-state outbreak that is occurring nationally. Persons who use injection and non-injection drugs, persons with unstable housing or are homeless, persons with recent history of incarceration, and men who have sex with men (MSM) are at considerable risk for infection. There is continued transmission of hepatitis A in West Virginia due to increasing case counts and the long incubation period of the disease.

To help prevent the spread of this outbreak, BPH encourages all healthcare providers, including emergency departments to 1) report all suspect and confirmed cases of hepatitis A infection to the local health department within 24 hours of identification; 2) screen patients for possible high-risk behaviors related to hepatitis; 3) maintain a high index of suspicion for hepatitis A infection among high-risk individuals with elevated liver function tests and jaundice; and 4) order a complete hepatitis panel. Patients should be evaluated for inclusion into the following high-risk groups and offered hepatitis A vaccine if not currently symptomatic with hepatitis A:

- Persons with a history of substance use disorder
- Persons currently homeless or who have unstable housing
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Individuals incarcerated within the last 6 weeks
- Persons with underlying liver disease

Additionally, those with ongoing, close contact during the patient's three-week infectious period and experiencing hepatitis symptoms to high-risk individuals can be vaccinated. Complete vaccination recommendations are available at <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/InterimOutbreakGuidance-HAV-VaccineAdmin.htm>.

For more information, contact your local health department or the Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services, Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) at 1 (800) 423-1271, extension 1 or (304) 558-5358, extension 1. Information about the hepatitis A outbreak in West Virginia including updated case counts can be found at www.hepawarewv.org.

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to local health departments and professional associations. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information as appropriate to the target audience.

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