



HEPATITIS A

STATEWIDE OUTBREAK

Provider's Guide to Transmission, Risk Groups, and Prevention



Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology
350 Capitol St. Room 125
Charleston, WV 25301
T: 304.558.5358 ext 1 | F: 304.558.8763
www.hepawarewv.org

WHAT IS HEPATITIS A?

West Virginia is experiencing a statewide 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. The current outbreak is being transmitted via person-to-person spread, and is not due to exposure to contaminated food and/or beverages.

Signs and Symptoms



Nausea, Vomiting, and Abdominal Pain



Jaundice, Dark Urine, and Pale Stools



Fever, Fatigue, Anorexia, and Malaise

High Risk Groups

The current outbreak is affecting vulnerable populations across West Virginia. 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



Persons with underlying liver disease, including hepatitis B and hepatitis C



Persons with recent history of incarceration



Persons with ongoing, frequent exposure to high risk groups

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 is ineffective against HAV. Washing hands with soap and water is the only way to keep your hands free of HAV.



STOPPING THE SPREAD

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

Screening

Screen patients for high risk behaviors such as:

- Injection and non-injection drug use
- Homelessness and/or unstable housing
- Recent incarceration
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Persons with ongoing and/or frequent exposure to high risk individuals

Others at high risk for complications of HAV infection include:

- Persons with acute or chronic liver disease, including those with hepatitis B and/or hepatitis C

Vaccination

Offer vaccination to patients who do not have symptoms of HAV, and who are in any of the high risk groups listed above.

Although the recommendation is for a 2 dose series separated by 6 months, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that providers offer 1 dose to patients in high risk groups due to the mobility of the population. One dose has been shown to effectively control the spread of HAV during outbreaks.

Individuals who wish to complete the series may return after 6 months to receive the second dose using private supplied stock.

