

June 29, 2018

UPDATE: Health Advisory: Hepatitis A Virus Outbreak in Middle Tennessee

This health advisory informs local healthcare providers about recent hepatitis A virus (HAV) infections affecting men who have sex with men and people who use illicit drugs in TN; there is concern that the outbreak will rapidly spread to people who are experiencing homelessness. This document contains information and recommendations on HAV. [New information is in blue.](#)

[Please share this information with colleagues as you deem necessary.](#)

Key Messages:

- [36](#) Cases of acute HAV have been confirmed in Nashville/Davidson County; [5 of the 36 cases](#) have been diagnosed in inmates of the Davidson County correctional facilities. 2 of the 36 cases were diagnosed in persons experiencing homelessness. Zero deaths.
- June 9, 2018 Health officials began offering hepatitis A vaccinations at Davidson County correctional facilities for the inmates and public safety staff.
- CDC lab genotype testing results from one of the samples in Nashville matches the strain of hepatitis A found in the recent outbreaks around the country.
- The outbreak is being transmitted person-to-person and is primarily affecting men who have sex with men (MSM), and injection and non-injection drug users.
- There is concern that the outbreak will affect people who are experiencing homelessness as has occurred in outbreaks across the country. [MPHD continues to work with TN Dept. of Health, and many organizations to provide hepatitis A vaccination outreach at different locations throughout Davidson County. Refer to attached document for next week's locations and time.](#)
- **Vaccination, washing hands with soap and water, and safe sex practices are important in preventing HAV transmission.**
- Vaccination is recommended for men who have sex with men, people who use illicit drugs, homeless individuals, food handlers, and anyone who works on a frequent, on-going basis with those at-risk for HAV.
- **A single dose of hepatitis A vaccine is more than 94% protective for at least 10 years.**
- **There is no shortage of hepatitis A vaccines for at-risk groups in Nashville, TN.**
- Suspect cases should be reported to the Health Department while the patient is still at the treating facility so individuals can be interviewed and are not lost to follow-up.
- Appropriate post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP, vaccine +/- immune globulin) should be given to close contacts of known cases. Refer to CDC and TDOH HAV websites for more details.
<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm>

Please remember to offer hepatitis A vaccination to your patients who are requesting or receiving HIV PrEP.

Recommendations for Providers

Based upon the experience of Kentucky and other states, Tennessee is at risk of a significant hepatitis A outbreak in the coming months. Clinicians can take the following important steps now to protect high risk patients and mitigate the spread of illness:

1. **Hepatitis A vaccine** is already recommended for **adults at high risk** of exposure or severe illness, but most adults who need the vaccine have not received it. Offer vaccine or refer your patients who need or request hepatitis A vaccine. Encourage patients in the at-risk group to accept vaccination.

*People with the following risk factors can receive at **no charge** a single dose of hepatitis A vaccine at the 3 MPHD locations – Lentz, East, and Woodbine. A single dose of the 2-dose Hepatitis A vaccine series can provide protection for more than a decade.

- a. Persons who use illicit drugs (injection or non-injection) *
- b. Men who have sex with men*
- c. People who are experiencing homelessness or are unstably housed *

As always, uninsured or underinsured persons with chronic liver disease due to hepatitis B or C are eligible to receive the hep A vaccine at MPHD for free or a minimal charge based on income.

Also, an agreement with Neighborhood Health has been established to provide hepatitis A vaccine at **no charge** to those in the three at-risk groups. The Neighborhood Health locations are Downtown Clinic, Madison Clinic, and My House Clinic.

2. **Consider hepatitis A vaccine for any child age 12 months or older through 18 years who has not had it.** Tennessee began requiring this vaccine for kindergarten in 2011. It is routinely given at age 1, but the CDC advises it may be given to any older child through age 18 years who has not had it. Federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program vaccine may be used for any eligible child, including children without health insurance coverage and those on TennCare.
3. **Recognize and report cases to public health.** Persons with the acute onset of symptoms of hepatitis (yellowing of eyes or skin, fever, nausea/vomiting, dark urine, pale stool, diarrhea, abdominal pain, malaise, fatigue and loss of appetite) should have a serologic test for acute hepatitis A IgM; liver function tests (LFTs) are often elevated also. Do not test persons without signs of acute hepatitis: false positive IgM results can occur in persons without clinical illness, especially in the elderly. Collect blood specimen ($\geq 1.5\text{mL}$ in volume) in either a serum separator tube (SST) or red top plain with no additive during patient's acute illness or within 14 days of symptom onset; send to lab to check for hepatitis A IgM. **If hepatitis A IgM and LFTs are elevated, reserve sample for additional testing and call MPHD ASAP.** Acute hepatitis A is **reportable** to the Metro/Nashville Health Department to initiate a time-sensitive contact investigation and provide **post-exposure prophylaxis** to at-risk contacts within 2 weeks of exposure. If you have any hepatitis A related questions, you may call 615-340-5632 or e-mail hepatitisAresponse@nashville.gov. E-mails will be checked at least once daily M-F 8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

Resources:

Hepatitis A for Health Professionals

www.nashville.gov/Health-Department

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/havfaq.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm>

Hepatitis A Information for Patients

www.nashville.gov/Health-Department

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/pdfs/hepageneralfactsheet.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/Populations/PDFs/HepGay-FactSheet.pdf>

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/HepA_508.pdf