pennsylvania DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH 2022-PAHAN-617-1-05-ADV Outbreak of Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) Infections in SE Pennsylvania

DATE:	January 5, 2022
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Keara Klinepeter, Acting Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Outbreak of Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) Infections in SE Pennsylvania
DISTRIBUTION:	SE District
LOCATION:	n/a
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a "Health Advisory," and provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, INFECTION CONTROL, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; EMS COUNCILS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; FQHCs: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Summary

- The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) and the Montgomery County Office of Public Health (MCOPH) are investigating an outbreak of hepatitis A virus (HAV) infections in southeast Pennsylvania.
- Cases are associated with an Italian restaurant in Montgomery County.
- Healthcare providers should consider hepatitis A as a diagnosis in anyone with jaundice or elevated liver enzymes and clinically compatible symptoms of acute hepatitis. Confirm a hepatitis A diagnosis by testing serum for presence of immunoglobulin M (IgM) antibodies to hepatitis A virus and report all cases via PA-NEDSS.
- Laboratories should save serum samples for **at least 10 days** to assist public health officials in the investigation of transmission.
- Please report any suspected clusters of hepatitis A by calling your local health department or 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258).

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) and the Montgomery County Office of Public Health (MCOPH) are investigating an outbreak of hepatitis A virus (HAV) infections in southeast Pennsylvania.

There are eight laboratory-confirmed HAV infections among Pennsylvania residents in this outbreak associated with an Italian restaurant in Montgomery County. Of 7 people with information available, 6 (86%) have been hospitalized. One death is under investigation.

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable, liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV) ranging in severity from mild infection lasting a few weeks to severe disease lasting several months. Hepatitis A usually spreads when a person unknowingly ingests the virus from objects, food, or drinks contaminated by small, undetected amounts of stool from an infected person. Hepatitis A can also spread from close personal contact with an infected person such as through sex or caring for someone who is ill.

Since 2017, multiple states including Pennsylvania have experienced large, ongoing hepatitis A outbreaks affecting people who use drugs and/or people who are homeless. Populations at particular risk during these outbreaks identified in multiple U.S. states include persons who use injection and non-injection drugs, and/or persons who are homeless, and their close direct contacts, as well as men who have sex with men (MSM).

Recommendations for Health Care Providers

- 1. Consider hepatitis A as a diagnosis in anyone with jaundice or elevated liver enzymes and clinically compatible symptoms of acute hepatitis.
- 2. Confirm a hepatitis A diagnosis by testing serum for presence of immunoglobulin M (IgM) antibodies to hepatitis A virus and report all cases via PA-NEDSS.
- Encourage persons who have been exposed recently to HAV and who have not been vaccinated
 to be administered one dose of single-antigen hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG) as
 soon as possible, within 2 weeks after exposure. Guidelines vary by age and health status
 (please see https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/InterimOutbreakGuidance-HAV-VaccineAdmin.htm for additional information).
- 4. Save serum samples for at least 10 days to assist public health officials in the investigation of transmission (i.e., confirmation of antibody test, HAV RNA test, genotyping, and sequencing). PADOH or your local county or municipal health department will contact you if serum samples are requested for molecular characterization.
- 5. Ensure all persons diagnosed with hepatitis A are reported to the PADOH web-based electronic disease surveillance system, PA-NEDSS: https://www.nedss.state.pa.us/nedss/default.aspx
- 6. CDC recommends the following groups be vaccinated against hepatitis A:
 - a. All children at age 1 year
 - b. Persons who are at increased risk for infection:
 - Persons traveling to or working in countries that have high or intermediate endemicity of hepatitis A;
 - ii. Men who have sex with men;
 - iii. Persons who use injection and non-injection drugs;
 - iv. Persons who have occupational risk for infection;
 - v. Persons who have chronic liver disease;
 - vi. Persons who have clotting-factor disorders;
 - vii. Household members and other close personal contacts or adopted children newly arriving from countries with high or intermediate hepatitis A endemicity; and
 - viii. Persons with direct contact with persons who have hepatitis A.
 - ix. Persons aged 12 months and older who are currently homeless or who have had periods of homelessness in the past (newly approved Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' (ACIP) recommendation).
 - c. Persons who are at increased risk for complications from hepatitis A, including people with chronic liver diseases, such as hepatitis B or hepatitis C.
 - d. Any person wishing to obtain immunity.

Please report any suspected clusters of hepatitis A by calling your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH** (1-877-724-3258).

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of January 4, 2022 but may be modified in the future.