

HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK SPREADING ACROSS MICHIGAN

Two Cases Confirmed in DHD#10 Jurisdiction

January 31, 2018 – Michigan is in the midst of a Hepatitis A outbreak that started in the southeast and is quickly moving north and west. Approximately 16 counties, including Grand Traverse and Isabella, are part of the outbreak. Two counties within District Health Department #10 (DHD#10), Mecosta and Newaygo, each have one case associated with the outbreak. One more confirmed case in either county will add them to the outbreak list.

Since the [Hepatitis A outbreak](#) started in August 2016, there have been 715 confirmed cases, 582 hospitalizations, and 24 deaths correlated with it. Hepatitis A is a serious, highly contagious liver disease caused by the Hepatitis A virus. Although Hepatitis A is often transmitted through food or water contaminated with feces, no common sources of food, beverages, or drugs have been identified as a potential source of infection with the Michigan outbreak. Transmission appears to be through direct person-to-person spread and illicit drug use. Those with history of injection and non-injection drug use, homelessness or transient housing, and incarceration are thought to be at greater risk in this outbreak setting.

Handwashing is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of getting hepatitis A and other diseases. “Hepatitis A is spread by the fecal-oral route,” states Dr. Jennifer Morse, Medical Director for DHD#10. “This means you can get ill if you eat, drink, or touch your mouth with any food, drink, object, or your hands that may have been in contact with stool (poop) from someone infected with hepatitis A. Washing your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom and before handling or eating food can help prevent this.”

Getting vaccinated is another important way to reduce your risk. We highly recommend that the following individuals, who are known to be at high risk for getting hepatitis A, get vaccinated:

- Persons with a history of substance abuse (using both injection and non-injection drugs)
- Persons currently homeless or in transient living
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Persons incarcerated in correctional facilities (in jail or at risk for being in jail)
- Persons who are in close contact with any of the above risk groups (either through their employment, volunteer work, or social situation)
- Persons with underlying liver disease (while not at higher risk of infection, these individuals are at increased risk of complications)
- Food handlers with one or more of the above risk factors and food handlers in outbreak areas.
- Healthcare workers who care for patients and work in the outbreak areas. This includes healthcare workers in emergency departments, EMS, paramedics, first responders, etc.

You may discuss vaccination options with your employer, physician, pharmacy, or contact the local branch of your health department. Anyone who has been exposed to a person with hepatitis A needs special treatment and should contact their healthcare provider or health department right away. Since 2005, it has been recommended that



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COUNTIES SERVED:

Crawford
Kalkaska
Lake
Manistee
Mason
Mecosta
Missaukee
Newaygo
Oceana
Wexford



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all children routinely receive the hepatitis A vaccine due to increasing number of cases, often due to outbreaks from contaminated foods.

Not everyone who has hepatitis A will have symptoms; however, most do. Symptoms include fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, dark urine, and yellowing of the skin and eyeballs. If you think you have been exposed to hepatitis A and are experiencing these kinds of symptoms, please get medical care right away.

Information on hepatitis A can be found on our website at www.dhd10.org/hepatitis-a or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services website at www.michigan.gov/hepatitisAoutbreak.

About DHD #10

District Health Department #10 (DHD #10) is Michigan's largest geographical health department, mandated to promote and protect the public from unsafe and hazardous conditions and provide methods of promoting good health and disease prevention. Some of the vital programs provided by DHD #10 include Immunizations, Infectious Disease Control, STI Testing and Counseling, WIC, Maternal Infant Health Program, Healthy Families Northern Michigan, Children's Special Health Services, Hearing and Vision Screening, Family Planning, Cancer Screening, Worksite Wellness, Smoking Cessation, Substance Use Prevention, Chronic Disease Prevention, and Environmental Health Services. DHD #10 serves Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, and Wexford counties. For more information, visit www.dhd10.org.

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