



County of San Diego

NICK MACCHIONE, FACHE
AGENCY DIRECTOR

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
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WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.
PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

September 15, 2017

TO: Restaurant Association

FROM: Wilma J. Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.,
Public Health Officer & Director,
Public Health Services

RE: VACCINATION OF FOOD HANDLERS

On August 21, 2017, in an open letter addressed to various stakeholders, including Food Handlers, I recommended that all food handlers be vaccinated against the Hepatitis A virus. I address you now as a food facility operator, and ask that you do all you can to encourage and assist the food handlers in your facility to get vaccinated. Food handlers can become infected with Hepatitis A through causes unrelated to their food facility work, and can be handling food and potentially spreading the virus before an infection is recognized. The best way to prevent food service from contributing to this outbreak is for all food handlers to get vaccinated. I have attached my August 21 letter that provides information on vaccination options.

In addition, it remains critically important that all food handlers consistently and frequently apply recommended procedures for cleaning and sanitizing utensils and food contact surfaces, and conduct proper hand washing procedures. I have also attached prior guidance on those subjects. Finally, employees should not come to work when ill, and I encourage you to be diligent in monitoring your employees for any signs of illness.

Thank you for your assistance in doing your part to mitigate the potential spread of this outbreak. You and your food handlers can help to ensure that residents and visitors to San Diego remain confident that they can dine out safely.

Sincerely,

Wilma J. Wooten, M.D.
WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.
Public Health Officer
Director, Public Health Officer

Attachment: August 21, 2017 Letter; Disinfection Guidelines

For more information on Hepatitis A or to report individuals with vomiting, diarrhea or fever associated with food consumption, contact:

Email: epidemiology.fhd@sdcounty.ca.gov

Phone: (858) 505-6814

Website: www.sdcdeh.org



HEPATITIS A DISINFECTION GUIDELINES

Hepatitis A is a liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus. Highly contagious, the Hepatitis A virus is usually transmitted by the fecal-oral route, either through person-to-person contact or consumption of contaminated food or water. Contamination can occur when infected persons do not wash their hands properly after going to the bathroom and then touch other objects or food items. Surfaces that are frequently touched should be cleaned and sanitized often.

- Toilet Room Surfaces
- Kitchen Surfaces
- Doorknobs
- Recreation Equipment
- Light Switch Plates
- Phones
- Computer Keyboards
- Railings
- High Chairs
- Tables and Chairs
- Wheelchairs and Walkers
- Remote Controls

Effective Disinfectants

Chlorine Bleach: Mix and use the chlorine solution promptly. Allow 1 minute of contact time and then rinse with water.

- **5000 ppm:** 1 and 2/3 cups bleach in 1 gallon water. Use for stainless steel, food/mouth contact items, tile floors, nonporous surfaces, counters, sinks and toilets.

Other Disinfectants:

To determine if a product is effective against Hepatitis A, review the product label or product specification sheet and ensure it states “**effective against Hepatitis A**” or “**effective against Feline Calicivirus**”. You may also search the product name in the Environmental Protection Agency’s registered product database at:

<https://iaspub.epa.gov/apex/pesticides/f?p=PPLS:1>

Steps to Clean Spills of Vomit or Feces

- Put on personal protective equipment, including two sets of gloves, masks and gowns.
- Block-off area immediately.
- Clean up visible debris using disposable absorbent material (paper towels or other type of disposable cloths) and minimize aerosols.
- Discard soiled items carefully in an impervious plastic bag.
- Thoroughly clean affected area
- Disinfect area and objects surrounding the contamination with an appropriate disinfectant effective against Hepatitis A. See box to the left “Effective Disinfectants” for 5000 ppm sanitizing solution.
- Take off outer set of gloves, gown and mask, in that order, and discard before exiting contaminated clean-up area.
- Place discarded PPE in an impervious plastic bag.
- Wearing the inner set of gloves, transport bag to a secure trash container; do not allow the bag to come into contact with clothing.
- Always wash your hands after handling any contaminated material, trash or waste.

Specific Cleaning Methods

Wear Gloves and Protect Your Clothing

Hard Surfaces

Disinfect surface with bleach, or other approved disinfectant, ensuring the correct contact time is being met. If the surface is in a food preparation area, make sure to rinse with water after. For surfaces that are corroded or damaged by bleach, use another product that is effective against Hepatitis A.



Proper Handling

- Use chemicals in well-ventilated areas.
- Avoid contact between incompatible chemicals.
- Prevent chemical contact with food during cleaning.
- Handle contaminated material as little as possible and with minimal agitation to reduce aerosols.
- Manage waste safely and dispose in a secure trash container.

Preventing the Spread of Illness

- ✓ All food employees must practice diligent handwashing and good personal hygiene (see below for handwashing procedures).
- ✓ Use utensils or gloves to eliminate bare hand contact with ready- to-eat food.
- ✓ Thoroughly and continuously disinfect the facility and food areas using the guidelines at the reverse of this document.

Handwashing

- ✓ Food employees shall thoroughly wash their hands and arms with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; thoroughly rinse with clean running water and properly dry their hands and arms.
- ✓ Ensure handwashing signs are posted in the appropriate locations.

Employees shall wash their hands in all of the following instances:

- Immediately before engaging in food preparations, including working with non-prepackaged food, clean equipment and utensils, and unwrapped single-use food containers and utensils.
- After touching bare human body parts other than clean hands and clean, exposed portions of arms.
- After using the toilet room.
- After caring for, or handling any animal allowed in a food facility.
- After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, using tobacco, eating or drinking.
- After handling soiled equipment or utensils.
- Before putting on disposable gloves to start working with food.
- During food preparation, as often as necessary to remove dirt and contamination; and when changing tasks to prevent cross-contamination.
- When switching between working with raw food and working with ready-to-eat food.
- Before dispensing or serving food, or handling clean tableware and serving utensils in the food service area.
- After engaging in other activities that contaminate hands.

Employee Health Guidelines

All food employees must be knowledgeable of the relationship between personal health, hygiene and food safety. Information on this topic can be found in the California Retail Food Code, Chapter 3 Article 3 – Employee Health.

The Employees are Responsible for Notifying the Person in Charge

- Notify the Person in Charge if you have been diagnosed with a Hepatitis A infection. Be advised that employees are also required to report the following: Salmonella, Shigella, Enterohemorrhagic or shiga toxin-producing E. coli, Norovirus, and Entamoeba histolytica.
- Remember, you should not work with food or utensils if you are sick with acute gastrointestinal illnesses. **Acute gastrointestinal illness is diarrhea, either alone or with vomiting, fever or abdominal cramps.**

The Person in Charge is Responsible for Meeting the Following Requirements

- **REPORT** to the County of San Diego - Department of Environmental Health (DEH) when a food employee is diagnosed with Hepatitis A. **Call (858) 505-6814.** Remember that the following illnesses must also be reported: Salmonella, Shigella, Enterohemorrhagic or shiga toxin-producing E. coli, Norovirus, and Entamoeba histolytica.
- **REPORT** to the DEH if **two or more people** are sick with acute gastrointestinal illness; **call (858) 505-6814.** **Acute gastrointestinal illness is diarrhea, either alone or with vomiting, fever or abdominal cramps.**
- **EXCLUDE** a food employee from the food facility if diagnosed with Salmonella, Hepatitis A, Norovirus, Shigella, Enterohemorrhagic or shiga toxin producing E. coli, or Entamoeba histolytica. Only the County of San Diego DEH or the Health and Human Services Agency can clear an excluded employee to return to work.
- **RESTRICT** a food employee from working with exposed food, clean equipment, clean linens, clean utensils and unwrapped single-service articles if food employee is suffering from symptoms of acute gastrointestinal illness or experiencing persistent coughing, sneezing or nasal discharges. Restrictions can be removed by the Person in Charge when the food employee states they no longer have symptoms of illness.



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WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.
PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

August 21, 2017

TO: Fire and Emergency Medical Services Agencies
Food Handlers
Healthcare Personnel
Homeless Providers
Law Enforcement Agencies
Local Businesses
Substance Use Treatment Providers

FROM: Wilma J. Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.,
Public Health Officer & Director,
Public Health Services

ONGOING HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Public Health Services Division, in the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, continues to investigate a large, [ongoing outbreak of Hepatitis A](#). This disease is a highly contagious liver infection that is spread when a person ingests food or water that has been contaminated by the feces of an infected person (i.e., touching objects or eating food that someone with Hepatitis A handled). As of **August 21, 2017, 352 cases** have been reported since late November 2016, with most cases occurring since March 2017. This is significantly higher than the one or two cases per month typically reported.

The majority of persons impacted in this outbreak have been homeless and/or persons using illicit drugs. Hepatitis A is usually transmitted when an infected person has not washed her/his hands after using the bathroom or before preparing and eating food.

Hepatitis A vaccination is the best way to prevent the disease. Public Health Services is working to increase access to the vaccine for homeless persons and illicit drug users through large vaccination clinics and small outreach teams. Most employees have a low risk of contracting Hepatitis A if they comply with hand-washing and other hygiene requirements associated with their jobs. The following categories of people are routinely recommended to get the Hepatitis A vaccine by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices:

- Users of injection and non-injection illegal drugs;
- People with chronic liver conditions, such as cirrhosis, Hepatitis C, & Hepatitis B;
- Men who have sex with men;

- Travelers to countries with high or medium rates of HAV;
- Persons with clotting factor disorders; and
- Any person who wishes to be immune to Hepatitis A.

As Public Health Officer, I am recommending that the following categories of people in San Diego County get the vaccine because of this outbreak:

- Homeless and housing unstable individuals;
- Individuals with ongoing, close contact with homeless and illicit drug using individuals, including health care, public safety and sanitation workers, and those who work in homeless shelters and service agencies; and
- Food handlers.


As local agencies and businesses, you can do a lot to prevent the spread of Hepatitis A. Such strategies include the following:

- Remind employees of the importance of hand-washing with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, and before preparing, serving, or eating food.
- [Maintain routine and consistent cleaning](#) of bathrooms for employees and the public, using a chlorine-based disinfectant (bleach) with a ratio of 1 and 2/3 cup of bleach to one gallon of water. Due to the high bleach concentration of this mix, rinse surfaces with water after 1 minute of contact time and wear gloves while cleaning.
- For employees in physical contact with others, especially those at risk for Hepatitis A, wear disposable gloves and wash hands after each encounter.
- Coordinate with your occupational health provider to determine if the Hepatitis A vaccine should be offered to employees.

Everyone can play a role in addressing this significant public health threat. Thank you for your help to contain the spread of this Hepatitis A outbreak. Attached are several documents to share with employees and others. These include a *Hepatitis A flyer* and a *Frequently Asked Questions* document.

For additional information, please go to the [County of San Diego Hepatitis A webpage](#) where you will find Hep A Fact Sheets in five different languages: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [Arabic](#), and [Vietnamese](#). Also, here you will find the most recent Hepatitis A case counts, [Hepatitis A press releases](#), [Hep A FAQs](#), [Hepatitis A Infection Prevention & Control handout \(Spanish\)](#), and other resources. If you are interested in having someone from the county give an educational presentation on Hepatitis A to your staff and/or other organizations or ordering Hepatitis A “Hygiene Kits,” please let us know. If you have any questions, please contact the Epidemiology Program at 619-692-8499 or send an email to Epi.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Sincerely,


WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.
Public Health Officer
Director, Public Health Officer