



# County of San Diego

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**TO:** Fire and Emergency Medical Services Agencies  
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

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE ONGOING HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK IN DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO AND EL CAJON AREAS**

Public Health Services Division, in the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, is currently investigating a large 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 May 19, 2017, 94 cases have been reported over the past six months, with most cases occurring in March and April. 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 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.

What can local agencies and businesses do to prevent the spread of Hepatitis A?

- 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 using a chlorine-based disinfectant (bleach) with a ratio of ¾ cup of bleach to one gallon of water. Include bathrooms that are for employees only and those that are open to the public.
- 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 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 in containing the spread of this Hepatitis A outbreak. Attached are several documents to share with employees or 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](#). If you have any questions, please contact the Epidemiology Program at 619-692-8499 or send an email to [Epi.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Epi.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov).