

Hepatitis A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Volunteers with Direct Contact with Homeless People

Who is at risk for hepatitis A?

The current hepatitis A outbreak in San Diego County has primarily affected homeless people and illicit drug users. People who work closely and routinely with homeless persons, or who clean kitchens, bathrooms, and streets shared by homeless persons, may also be at risk for getting this disease. Volunteers who are not usually in frequent and close contact with homeless individuals have a very low risk of getting hepatitis A.

Is it safe to volunteer this year and serve food to homeless people?

Yes! This outbreak should not interfere with your organization's traditions of hospitality. By using safe food handling practices, especially thorough **handwashing** before preparing and serving food, before eating, and after using the bathroom, volunteers and clients can be protected from many contagious diseases.

What should volunteers do?

Everyone should wash their hands with soap and water before preparing, serving, and eating food. Handwashing is recommended after any activity that may contaminate hands. Volunteers should not work when they are sick. Volunteers should wear disposable gloves if they have any cuts, sores, or rashes on their hands, but wearing gloves does not replace handwashing because you could still touch a contaminated surface while wearing them.

Who should get vaccinated?

Volunteers who participate only for special events and holidays do not need to be vaccinated for these few occasions. Volunteers who work frequently and closely with homeless persons, especially volunteers who clean kitchens and bathrooms, are recommended to get the hepatitis A vaccine. A full list of the groups recommended for vaccine can be found on the backside of this sheet.

How is hepatitis A spread?

Hepatitis A spreads by putting food or drink that has been in contact with the feces (poop) of an infected person. Hepatitis A can be spread by:

- Touching objects or eating food that someone with hepatitis A virus infection handled,
- Having sex with someone who has hepatitis A virus infection, and
- Forgetting to wash your hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers.



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Where can volunteers get more information about hepatitis A?

A list of resources about hepatitis A can be found below. For additional information about the outbreak and associated resources, please go to sandiegocounty.gov/HepA where you will find the most recent *Hepatitis A* case counts, press releases, FAQs, and other resources. Please call 2-1-1 or visit 211sandiego.org for additional information.

Where can volunteers get vaccinated?

Most individuals can request hepatitis A vaccine from their regular doctor or medical home. Uninsured persons may call 2-1-1 to find a community health center or public health center that offers the vaccine.

Additional County of San Diego Hepatitis A Resources

- The County's hepatitis A website, sandiegocounty.gov/HepA, which includes:
 - *Hepatitis A Fact Sheets* in five different languages: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [Arabic](#), and [Vietnamese](#)
 - Post the *Hepatitis A Handwashing Poster* in bathrooms and kitchens. The poster is available in English and Spanish http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs/Epidemiology/HW_Vertical_Eng.pdf
- The Department of Environmental Health website, <http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/deh/fhd/food/whatsnew.html> has information on safe food handling practices, which includes:
 - *Hepatitis A Disinfection Guidelines* in six different languages: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Tagalog](#), [Arabic](#), [Farsi](#) and [Vietnamese](#).
 - *Food Safety Guide for Non-Profit Organizations that Distribute Food* http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/deh/fhd/food/pdf/publications_npofooddistribution.pdf



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