



To: CAHAN San Diego Participants

Date: Feb 10, 2023

From: Public Health Services

Health Advisory: Increase in Hepatitis A Virus Infections including Persons Experiencing Homelessness in San Diego County

Key Messages

- Six acute hepatitis A virus (HAV) infections have been confirmed in San Diego County residents, with symptom onsets beginning January 10, 2023, through February 6, 2023. None of the cases reported international travel, but three were persons experiencing homelessness (PEH).
- Early identification of cases, post-exposure prophylaxis, and vaccination of at-risk populations are the key to the prevention of hepatitis A.
- Report all suspect and confirmed HAV cases to the Epidemiology Unit by faxing a Confidential Morbidity Report, or by calling 619-692-8499 (Monday-Friday 8 AM-5 PM), or 858-565-5255 (after hours).

Situation

Six acute HAV infections have been confirmed in San Diego County residents, with symptom onsets beginning January 10, 2023, through February 6, 2023. Three of the cases are persons experiencing homeless (PEH). None of the cases reported international travel. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the epidemiology of Hepatitis A, with fewer cases being reported in more recent years; however, international travel is typically reported by San Diego County residents diagnosed with hepatitis A.

Background

Of the six reported cases, ages range from 39–66 years (median 47). None of the cases are known to have been vaccinated for HAV. Five of the six cases have been hospitalized with one death. No direct close contacts have been established between any of the cases, and no common food, beverage, or drug sources have yet been identified. Case investigations are ongoing.

Monitoring of hepatitis A cases is an ongoing process for the early detection of disease clusters. Currently, there are eight states with ongoing HAV outbreaks. The most recent hepatitis A outbreak involving San Diego County residents occurred in [2022 and was associated with organic strawberry](#) consumption. A [larger hepatitis A outbreak occurred in 2016-2018](#) among PEH and persons using illicit drugs. There were 592 confirmed or probable outbreak related HAV cases, including 20 deaths. This outbreak was officially over, on October 19, 2018, after 100 days with no reported cases.

Actions Requested

1. **Diagnose** HAV infection in individuals, especially the homeless and those who use illicit drugs, with discrete onset of symptoms (e.g., nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia, fever, malaise, dark urine, light-colored stool, or abdominal pain), and jaundice or elevated liver function tests.

2. **Report** all suspect and confirmed HAV cases to the Epidemiology Unit by faxing a [Confidential Morbidity Report](#) or by calling 619-692-8499 (Monday-Friday 8 AM-5 PM) or 858-565-5255 (after hours, during weekends, and on County-observed holidays). Since homeless individuals are at greater risk for HAV infection, providers are urged to contact the Epidemiology Program while suspected cases are still at the healthcare facility. This action will ensure that a public health investigator can interview the patient by phone for a risk history and will facilitate serum submission to the San Diego County Public Health Laboratory for possible genotyping.
3. **Provide** post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for close contacts of confirmed HAV cases. Susceptible people exposed to HAV should receive a dose of single-antigen HAV vaccine or [intramuscular \(IM\) immune globulin \(IG\) \(0.1 mL/kg\)](#), or both, as soon as possible within 2 weeks of last exposure. The efficacy of the combined HAV/Hepatitis B virus (HBV) vaccine for PEP has not been evaluated, so it is not recommended for PEP. Detailed information on PEP may be found on the CDPH [Hepatitis A Postexposure Prophylaxis Guidance Quicksheet](#) (updated April 2021).
4. **Vaccinate** all persons with [an indication for HAV vaccine](#): however, considering recent cases and past outbreaks, especially vaccinate PEH and those who use illegal drugs. The combined HAV/HBV vaccine may be used in this group if the individual is not already immune to HBV. Providers who do not have available vaccine may direct patients to an immunization clinic at the nearest County Public Health Center.

Resources

- [Hepatitis A - Information & Guidelines | CDC](#)
- [Hepatitis A Q&As for Health Professionals | CDC](#)
- [What is Hepatitis A - FAQ For the Public | CDC](#)
- [Hepatitis A Vaccine Information Statement | Immunize.org](#)
- [Hepatitis A | CDPH](#)
- [Guidelines and Resources | San Diego County](#)

Thank you for your participation.

CAHAN San Diego

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