



# COUNTY OF MONTEREY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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*Recipient of The California Endowment's 2017 Arnold X. Perkins Award for Outstanding Health Equity Practice*

## Health Alert

November 7, 2017

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### Updated Hepatitis A Outbreak Guidance

*A case of hepatitis A has been identified in a homeless individual in Monterey County.*

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#### **Current Situation**

Recently, a case of hepatitis A was identified in a homeless individual in Monterey County. This individual did not travel and so is assumed to have become ill due to transmission within the homeless community in Monterey County. Monterey County Health Department is investigating the case and contacts.

There is an ongoing outbreak of hepatitis A virus (HAV) disease in California primarily among persons experiencing homelessness or using illicit drugs in settings of limited sanitation. The outbreak is being spread person-to-person and through contact with fecally-contaminated environments. In San Diego County, at least 536 HAV cases and 20 deaths have been reported since November 2016. In Santa Cruz County, at least 74 cases have been reported since April 2017. The Health Department has not yet confirmed whether the virus strain in the Monterey County case is the same as the outbreak strain in California.

#### **Recommendations**

- **Immediately report suspected cases to the Monterey County Health Department.** Prompt reporting limits the spread of disease. Please notify the health department while the patient is still at the health care facility, as this may be the only opportunity to interview the patient.
  - Monday thru Friday, 8 am – 5 pm, call 831-755-4521 or fax 831-754-6682.
  - After hours call 831-755-5100 and ask for the Hazardous Materials Team, who will link you with the on-call Health Officer.
- **Order an IgM antibody test for HAV (IgM anti-HAV) for individuals who present with clinically compatible illness.**

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**Health Alert:** Warrants immediate action or attention. **Health Advisory:** Provides information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action. **Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action

- Total anti-HAV alone cannot distinguish between current disease, past disease, and vaccination-induced immunity.
- IgM anti-HAV testing should be limited to individuals with evidence of clinical hepatitis. Due to a high rate of false positives, it should **not** be used as a screening tool for asymptomatic patients or for patients without clinically compatible illness.
- Save the patient blood specimen for submittal to the Monterey County Public Health Laboratory for additional testing.
- **Vaccinate individuals at risk for HAV.** Due to local transmission of HAV in our county, the Monterey County Public Health Officer recommends the following groups be vaccinated with the hepatitis A vaccine:
  - People who are homeless.
  - Users of illegal drugs.
  - Men who have sex with men.
  - People with chronic liver disease, such as cirrhosis, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C. They may not be at increased risk of getting hepatitis A but are at increased risk of poor outcomes if infected.
  - People with ongoing, close contact (e.g. work with, provide services to, or clean up) after the homeless or illegal drug users.
- **Continue to offer routine vaccination to the following groups.**
  - Travelers to countries where hepatitis A is common.
  - People with clotting factor disorders.
  - People who conduct laboratory research with the virus.
  - People in close personal contact with adopted children from countries where hepatitis A is common.

If adult single antigen hepatitis A vaccine is not immediately available, providers may consider using the combined hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine (Twinrix®) for pre-exposure prophylaxis or deferring immunization until additional vaccine becomes available. Vaccine may also be available in pharmacies, and is covered as a pharmacy benefit for several insurance sources, including Medi-Cal fee for service and managed care, as well as several qualified health plans through Covered California. (See [http://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/newsroom/newsroom\\_26320.asp](http://files.medi-cal.ca.gov/pubsdoco/newsroom/newsroom_26320.asp))
- **Continue to offer routine vaccination to children against HAV.** At this time, pediatric vaccine supplies are ample, and recommendations for routine childhood immunizations are unchanged.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please call the Monterey County Health Department's Communicable Disease Unit at 831-755-4521, visit our website at [www.mtyhd.org/hepA](http://www.mtyhd.org/hepA), or refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) hepatitis A website: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm>.