



## Hepatitis A Outbreak

Last June, the Ohio Department of Health Bureau of Infectious Disease declared a statewide outbreak of hepatitis. From January 1, 2018 to June 3, 2019, there have been 2,997 cases reported. Sixty percent of these cases have been hospitalized and have resulted in 10 deaths.

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable liver disease that usually spreads when a person unknowingly consumes fecal matter (poop) — even in such small amounts that it is not seen with the naked eye — from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by the stool (poop) of an infected person. Hepatitis A also can spread from close personal contact with an infected person, such as through sexual contact.

Symptoms of hepatitis A include fatigue, low appetite, stomach pain, nausea, clay-colored stools and jaundice. People with hepatitis A can experience mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months.

Good hand-washing and vaccination are the best ways to prevent hepatitis A in at-risk individuals.

People at increased risk in this outbreak for hepatitis A include those with direct contact with individuals infected with the virus, including household and sexual contacts; people who use or inject street drugs; people with liver disease, such as cirrhosis, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C; those experiencing homelessness or unstable housing; and those who are or recently been in jail or prison.

To combat further spread of Hepatitis A, Cambridge-Guernsey County Health Department and Noble County Health Departments are launching a community awareness and education campaign as well as offering vaccinations.

Healthcare providers and others who interact with people seeking care are encouraged to evaluate them for vaccination based on their risk factors for hepatitis A, and to provide vaccination or refer them to the respective health department for vaccination.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has provided more than 54,000 doses of hepatitis A vaccine to local health departments. Declaring a hepatitis A outbreak ensures ODH access to additional hepatitis A vaccine through the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For more information about Hepatitis A vaccination contact the Cambridge-Guernsey County Health Department at 740-439-3577 or the Noble County Health Department at 740-732-4958.

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