

District Health Department #4

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INCREASED OCCURRENCE OF HEPATITIS A PROMPTS CALL FOR VACCINATION AND GOOD HYGIENE

As a result of hepatitis A outbreaks around the State, District Health Department No. 4 (DHD4) would like to remind residents that vaccination and proper hand washing are the best defense against hepatitis A.

NE Michigan currently does not have any confirmed cases of hepatitis A connected to the outbreaks occurring in Southeast Michigan, however, there is potential of spread across the State. DHD4 is encouraging healthcare providers to maintain a high index of suspicion for hepatitis infection among individuals, to assist in vaccination efforts to protect the public, and to promptly report all suspected cases to DHD4.

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable, contagious liver disease that often spreads through the ingestion of contaminated food or water or by contact with contaminated objects. While the risk of getting hepatitis A has been identified higher amongst the following groups:

- Persons with a history of substance abuse,
- Persons currently homeless or in transient living,
- Men who have sex with men,
- Persons incarcerated in correctional facilities,
- Persons with underlying liver disease,
- Persons who work or live with the above groups, especially healthcare workers.

Dr. Joshua Meyerson, Medical Director for DHD4 encourages good personal hygiene to prevent the spread of hepatitis A. “It is very important that you wash your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom and before handling or eating food. Getting the hepatitis A vaccine is also a great source of protection.”

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Hepatitis A can range from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious illness lasting several months. Illness generally occurs two to six weeks after exposure to the hepatitis A virus. Symptoms include fatigue, abdominal pain, yellow skin (jaundice), dark urine, and pale stool. Some people experience no symptoms. Vaccination and thorough hand washing can prevent infection.

DHD4 offers hepatitis A vaccine. For more information on the vaccines and clinic locations, call 989-356-4507 or visit our website at www.dhd4.org. For more information about Hepatitis A outbreak in Michigan and current recommendations please go to www.mi.gov/HepatitisAoutbreak.

District Health Department No. 4 serves Alpena, Cheboygan, Montmorency and Presque Isle counties since 1930. Our mission is to promote and protect the health of people and the communities where we live, learn, work and play.

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