

Hendricks County Health Department



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Public Health
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POTENTIAL HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK IN INDIANA

Hendricks County health officials urge citizens to get vaccinated against hepatitis A.

HENDRICKS COUNTY – Following a recent, large outbreak of hepatitis A cases in Kentucky, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) reports that there have been 77 confirmed cases of the virus statewide in 2018, 17 of which have been confirmed *in the past month*.

“Normally, fewer than 20 cases of hepatitis A are confirmed in Indiana per year, so the recent increase is concerning to public health officials,” reports Teresa Krupka, Public Health Nurse for the Hendricks County Health Department (HCHD).

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), hepatitis A is a highly contagious viral infection of the liver. It is most commonly spread through contact with the feces of an infected person. Transmission is presumed to occur person-to-person and through injection drug use.

“People who are most at risk for infection include injection and any other drug users, men who have sex with men, citizens who are currently homeless, and those who were recently incarcerated,” Krupka states. “However, *anyone* could be infected with hepatitis A by eating contaminated food or even contact with inanimate objects with small amounts of fecal residue, like a child’s toy.”

Since 2014, Indiana State Law has required that children be vaccinated for hepatitis A before the start of the school year. So, kindergarten through 3rd grade aged children have likely been vaccinated already.

“We highly recommend that Hendricks County residents be vaccinated for hepatitis A as soon as possible,” states Tammy Brinkman, Director of Public Health Nursing for the HCHD. “The hepatitis A vaccine is a 2-dose series of shots, given six months apart that provides life-long immunity to the virus. Anyone who handles food in schools, hospitals, or other places that feed large groups of people are also highly encouraged to get vaccinated.”

Dr. David Stopperich, Health Officer for the HCHD, says, “Common symptoms of hepatitis A are diarrhea, yellowing of skin and eyes (jaundice), nausea, vomiting, fatigue, stomach pain, fever, and dark colored urine. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, please contact your primary care provider immediately.”

You can schedule a vaccination appointment with the HCHD Nursing Clinic by calling 317-745-9222, or with your primary care provider. For more information on hepatitis A, please visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/>. For further updates on the potential outbreak in Indiana, please monitor the ISDH website at <https://calendar.in.gov/site/isdh/event/health-department-investigating-increase-in-hepatitis-a-cases/> or call the Hendricks County Health Department Nursing Division at 317-745-9222.

