



MERCER COUNTY

HEALTH DISTRICT

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Statewide Community Outbreak of Hepatitis A

Outbreaks of hepatitis A virus infection are occurring nationwide, including Ohio. In June 2018, the Ohio Department of Health declared a Statewide Community Outbreak of hepatitis A after observing an increase in cases linked to certain risk factors since the beginning of 2018. The Mercer County Health District is reporting two confirmed cases of hepatitis A in its jurisdiction.

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable liver disease that usually spreads when a person ingests fecal matter – even in microscopic amounts- from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by the stool of an infected person, such as through sex.

Good hand-washing and vaccination are the best ways to prevent hepatitis A in at-risk individuals. Individuals who have one or more risk factors for hepatitis A, call Mercer County Health District at 419-586-3251 to see about getting vaccinated.

People at increased risk for hepatitis A in Ohio's Statewide Community Outbreak include those with direct contact with known cases, men who have sex with men, people who use illicit drugs whether they are injected or not, people who are incarcerated, and people experiencing homelessness.

The disease spreads easily from person to person and can range from mild illness lasting a few weeks to severe illness lasting several months. Illness generally occurs two to six weeks after exposure to the hepatitis A virus. Symptoms of hepatitis A include fatigue, low appetite, stomach pain, nausea, clay-colored stools and jaundice.

People who believe that they are at high risk for hepatitis A infection, people who know that they have been exposed to someone with hepatitis A, or individuals who experience symptoms of hepatitis A should contact their healthcare provider.

Hepatitis A Outbreak Summary (March 11, 2019):

- Number of cases: 1931
- Illness onset range: 01/05/2018 – 03/03/2019
- Age range: 1-84 years
- Gender: 60% male
- Number of hospitalizations: 1194 (62%)
- Number of deaths: 7
- Number of counties with cases: 71 (81%)

For updated information please visit the ODH website at:

<https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/Hepatitis-Surveillance-Program/Hepatitis-A-Statewide-Community-Outbreak/>

The Mercer County Health District provides case management by interviewing people diagnosed with hepatitis A to identify other individuals who may have been in close contact with them. These individuals are then assessed to determine whether they should receive post-exposure vaccination as a precaution so that they don't get the hepatitis A virus and spread it to others. Mercer County Health District encourages that all high-risk individuals be vaccinated against hepatitis A, including first responders and others who may come into contact with infected people.

People at increased risk for hepatitis A in this outbreak include:

- People with direct contact with individuals infected with the virus
- Men who have sex with men
- People who use illicit drugs whether they are injected or not
- People who are incarcerated
- People experiencing homelessness
- People who have traveled to other areas of the U.S. currently experiencing outbreaks

Of the 1,931 Hepatitis A cases included in the outbreak:

- 66% report either injectable or non-injectable drug use
- 8% report homelessness
- 2% report they are MSM
- 29% report they are co-infected with hepatitis C
- 12% are or have recently been incarcerated

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