



Hepatitis A Outbreak Among Gay and Bisexual Men in Los Angeles

Protect Yourself Against Hepatitis A! Find out if you should get vaccinated.

Last month, Governor Brown declared a state of emergency in California for hepatitis A following a large outbreak of the infection among people who are homeless or use illicit drugs across the state. Now, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has reported an increased number of cases of hepatitis A (HAV) among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM). People living with HIV and MSM are at a higher risk for hepatitis A infection. While the risk is relatively small, hepatitis A is potentially life-threatening.

What is Hepatitis A and what are the symptoms?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious virus that infects the liver and can cause liver disease. Once you have the virus, it can last from a few weeks to several months, depending on the severity of the infection.

There are many symptoms of hepatitis A, which include:

- Fever
- Feeling Tired
- Loss of Appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Stomach Pain
- Dark Urine
- Grey Stool
- Yellowing of skin and eyes (jaundice)

How is it spread?

Hepatitis A spreads from person to person by putting something in your mouth (object, food, or drink) that has been in contact with feces of an infected person. This includes sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis A.

How is it treated?

Treatment for hepatitis A includes rest, good nutrition, fluids, and medical monitoring. Some people may need to be hospitalized, though most people recover completely and don't have lasting liver damage. It is especially important for those with weakened immune systems, including people living with HIV, to see their doctor as soon as possible if they have any symptoms of hepatitis A.

Am I at risk?

Anyone can get hepatitis A. However, MSM are more at-risk and people with a weakened immune system, including people living with HIV, are at a higher risk of developing a severe illness from hepatitis A. Other people at-risk for getting hepatitis A include those who:

- Travel or live in countries where hepatitis A is common (often due to poor sanitation)
- Live with someone who has hepatitis A
- Use recreational drugs
- Have sexual contact with someone who has hepatitis A
- Are homeless

How can I protect myself?

The best way to protect yourself against hepatitis A is to get vaccinated. The shot is safe, even for people living with HIV and it is very effective. It is very important that people with a weakened immune system, like people living with HIV, get vaccinated to protect themselves from hepatitis A. Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before, after and between sex, before eating or preparing food, and after using the bathroom can also be very helpful in preventing hepatitis A.

The hepatitis A is administered with two doses 6-12 months apart. You will be protected after your first shot after a few weeks; but receiving the second dose allows for longer lasting protection.

We offer the vaccine for our patients at our two Health Center locations:

Baldwin Hills: Gleichner/Chen Health Center, 323.329.9900

Long Beach: Long Beach Health Center, 562.432.7300

Other Resources are available at

Hepatitis A Vaccination Resources Medi-Cal: HAV vaccine is covered for patients enrolled in both fee-for-service and managed care plans. Vaccine administration is covered if administered in a provider's office or by an in-network pharmacy. No prior authorization is required. Patients or those assisting them can call the plan's member services number listed on the back of their Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card to obtain information on pharmacy services. Prior to referring a patient to an in-network pharmacy for hepatitis A vaccination, please contact the pharmacy to verify vaccine availability.

AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP): Hepatitis A vaccine is included on the ADAP formulary.

LAC DPH Clinics: Free hepatitis A vaccine is available at the LAC DPH Public Health Centers for any uninsured and underinsured at-risk people. Clinic times and locations are posted [here](#).

For Questions: Los Angeles County DPH Acute Communicable Disease Control Program: Weekdays 8:30am-5pm: call 213-240-7941 After hours: call 213-974-1234 and ask for the physician on call.

Reporting for Residents of Long Beach and Pasadena Long Beach Health and Human Services: Weekdays 8am-5pm: call 562-570-4302 After hours: call 562-435-6711 and ask for Communicable Disease Officer.

Pasadena Public Health Department:

Weekdays 8am-5pm: call the Communicable Disease Control Program 626-744-6089 After hours: call 626-744-6043.