



"Your Local  
Health Department"

## NEWS RELEASE

November 3, 2017

# Branch - Hillsdale - St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Hepatitis A Outbreak in Southeast Michigan

Hepatitis A cases continue to increase in Southeast Michigan and the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency would like to take this time to remind residents that vaccination is your best defense against hepatitis A. "We know that the hepatitis A vaccine is more than 90 percent effective in protecting someone who may be exposed to hepatitis A," states Val Newton, Director of Personal Health & Disease Prevention.

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable, contagious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. The virus is one of several types of hepatitis viruses that cause inflammation and affect your liver's ability to function. It is often spread through the ingestion of food or water contaminated with infected feces or by oral contact with contaminated objects. It is not spread through coughs or sneezes. Vaccination and proper hygiene are vital to ensuring the stop of person-to-person spread of hepatitis A. Since August 1, 2016, there have been 457 confirmed cases of hepatitis A, including 18 fatalities, associated with this outbreak in the city of Detroit and counties of Huron, Ingham, Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, Sanilac, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne.

Anyone with hepatitis A can spread it to others for 1-2 weeks before symptoms appear. Hepatitis A can range from a mild illness to a severe illness lasting several months and some cases death. Symptoms include fatigue, abdominal pain, Jaundice (yellow skin), dark urine and pale stool. Unlike other types of viral hepatitis, hepatitis A does not cause long-term liver damage and it doesn't become chronic. In rare cases, hepatitis A can cause a sudden loss of liver function especially in older adults or people with chronic liver diseases. Vaccination and proper hygiene can prevent infection.

As there are indications that the outbreak could spread outside of the Southeast region of Michigan, your local health department is urging all healthcare providers to promote hepatitis A vaccination to the highest risk individuals, including;

- Persons with a history of substance use
- Persons currently homeless or in transient living
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Persons incarcerated in correctional facilities
- Food handlers
- Healthcare workers
- Persons with underlying liver disease
- Persons who are in close contact with any of the above risk groups
- Persons wishing to be immune to hepatitis A

People who believe they have been exposed to hepatitis A or who have symptoms should contact their health care provider immediately.

Anyone who wants to be vaccinated should contact their health care provider or local health department. To learn more about services provided by the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency "Your Local Health Department", visit our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) and like our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/BHSJWIC/](https://www.facebook.com/BHSJWIC/).