



# HEPATITIS A

## STATEWIDE OUTBREAK

Provider's Guide to Transmission, Risk Groups, and Prevention



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### WHAT IS HEPATITIS A?

West Virginia is experiencing a statewide outbreak of hepatitis A. Hepatitis A is a highly contagious, vaccine preventable infection caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). It is spread via fecal-oral route, and is clinically indistinguishable from infections caused by hepatitis B or hepatitis C viruses.



The incubation period for hepatitis A is long, between 15 and 50 days. The average length of time between exposure and symptom onset is 28 days. The current outbreak is being transmitted via person-to-person spread, and is not due to exposure to contaminated food and/or beverages.

#### Signs and Symptoms

- Nausea, Vomiting, and Abdominal Pain
- Jaundice, Dark Urine, and Pale Stools
- Fever, Fatigue, Anorexia, and Malaise

#### High Risk Groups

The current outbreak is affecting vulnerable populations across West Virginia. These populations should be prioritized for vaccination efforts, and include:

- Persons who use injection and/or non-injection drugs
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Persons experiencing homelessness or unstable housing
- Persons with underlying liver disease, including hepatitis B and hepatitis C
- Persons with recent history of incarceration
- Persons with ongoing, frequent exposure to high risk groups

#### Prevention Measures

- Practice hand hygiene frequently using soap and water
- Adhere to standard precautions in healthcare facilities
- Screen and vaccinate individuals in high risk groups

**DID YOU KNOW?** Hand sanitizer is ineffective against HAV. Washing hands with soap and water is the only way to keep your hands free of HAV.



#### STOPPING THE SPREAD

Healthcare providers in West Virginia play a major role in halting outbreaks of infectious disease, including HAV. By screening, vaccinating, and educating patients, you can put the brakes on the spread of HAV in your community.

#### Screening

- Screen patients for high risk behaviors such as:
- Injection and non-injection drug use
  - Homelessness and/or unstable housing
  - Recent incarceration
  - Men who have sex with men (MSM)
  - Persons with ongoing and/or frequent exposure to high risk individuals
- Others at high risk for complications of HAV infection include:
- Persons with acute or chronic liver disease, including those with hepatitis B and/or hepatitis C



#### Vaccination

- Offer vaccination to patients who do not have symptoms of HAV, and who are in any of the high risk groups listed above.
- Although the recommendation is for a 2 dose series separated by 6 months, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that providers offer 1 dose to patients in high risk groups due to the mobility of the population. One dose has been shown to effectively control the spread of HAV during outbreaks.
- Individuals who wish to complete the series may return after 6 months to receive the second dose using private supplied stock.

