



## Kentucky Department for Public Health Frequently Asked Questions About Hepatitis A

- ◆ **How is hepatitis A virus (HAV) transmitted?**
  - Fecal-oral: Ingesting something contaminated with the feces of an infected person. This can be through inadequate hand washing and fecal materials is not always visible.
  - Close personal contact through sex or by caring for a person infected with hepatitis A.
  
- ◆ **When are patients with hepatitis A infectious to others?**
  - Patients are infectious 14 days before and 7 days after the onset of jaundice.
  
- ◆ **Who is at increased risk of acute infection with hepatitis A virus?**
  - Persons traveling to or working in countries that have high or intermediate endemicity of infection. Countries outside the United States other than Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Western Europe should be considered to have high or intermediate endemicity for hepatitis A virus infection;
  - Men having sex with men;
  - Persons who use injection and non-injection illicit drugs;
  - Persons with clotting-factor disorders;
  - Persons with chronic liver disease; and
  - Persons working with HAV-infected primates or with HAV in a research laboratory;
  - Persons who anticipate close personal contact (e.g., household contact or regular babysitting) with an international adoptee from a country of high or intermediate endemicity during the first 60 days following arrival of the adoptee in the United States.
  - Food service workers who work in areas where community-wide hepatitis A outbreaks are occurring and where state and local health authorities or private employers determine that such vaccination is cost-effective
  - During the current Kentucky hepatitis A outbreak, additional at-risk persons:
    - Homeless persons
    - Persons who have frequent work or volunteer contact with homeless persons or persons who use illicit drugs
  
- ◆ **How is hepatitis A prevented?**
  - The best prevention of hepatitis A is through vaccination.
    - The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations for who should be vaccinated is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/hepa.html>.
    - The Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) recommends the following groups be vaccinated due to the outbreak:
      - Homeless persons
      - Persons who use illicit/recreational drugs

- Individuals who work with or volunteer with the homeless or drug users
  - Healthcare workers who treat or care for the homeless or drug users
- Infection can also be prevented with good hand hygiene – more information on hand hygiene is available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/hepatitis.htm>.
  - Post a hand washing poster in bathrooms in your facility to remind individuals of the importance of hand hygiene
- ◆ **How is HAV killed?**
  - Clean facility surfaces with a 1:100 dilution of bleach to water – DPH sanitation guidelines are available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/hepatitis.htm>.
  - Facilities should ensure that disinfection products are used in accordance with the manufacture’s label and that they be labeled as effective against HAV or feline calicivirus.
  - Cook food to temperatures greater than 185 degrees F for 1 minute
- ◆ **If a patient becomes infected with HAV, what steps should be taken?**
  - Isolate patient from others until the end of their infectious period.
  - Contact your local public health department to report the case of acute hepatitis A and receive assistance in preventing additional cases in your facility.
  - Promptly provide Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) as recommended by the local or state health department.
  - PEP should be administered to susceptible contacts within 14 days of their exposure if those contacts are not able to provide dates of prior administration of hepatitis A (HepA) vaccine.
- ◆ **What are the reporting requirements for cases of acute HAV infection?**
  - In accordance with 902 KAR 2:020 (<http://www.lrc.ky.gov/kar/902/002/020.htm>) healthcare providers should report cases of acute hepatitis A within 24 hours to either the local or state health department.
  - Requests for information during public health investigations are exempt from the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) – please refer to Disclosures for Public Health Activities for more information.
- ◆ **What are the options for Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)?**
  - Single antigen HepA vaccine is preferred for healthy persons aged 12 months through 40 years.
  - Immune globulin (IG) (new dose of 0.1 mL/kg)
    - IG (0.1 mL/kg) should be used for children less than 12 months of age, immunocompromised persons, persons who have chronic liver disease, and persons for whom HepA vaccine is contraindicated.
    - IG is preferred for persons aged 41 years and older; however, HepA vaccine can be used if IG is not available.
    - IG may be used for persons eligible to be vaccinated, who elect not to receive HepA vaccine.

- Both single antigen HepA vaccine and IG: Persons administered IG for whom HepA vaccine is also recommended for other reasons should receive a dose of vaccine simultaneously with IG, unless contraindicated. For persons who receive HepA vaccine, the second dose to complete the two-dose series should be administered according to the licensed schedule.
  
- ◆ **How do you know who has been exposed to the person with hepatitis A?**
  - If a case of hepatitis A is identified in your facility, a local or state public health department staff member will perform a contact investigation.
  - Public health staff will contact you to collect more information about the ill individual and using the date of onset, will determine the individual's infectious period.
  - Any susceptible close contact identified as being exposed within the infectious period would be eligible for PEP.
  - Local or state public health staff will assist you in the determination of the infectious period, identification of close contacts, and appropriate timeframe for administering PEP.
  
- ◆ **Who is considered a “close contact” of a person infected with hepatitis A?**
  - Others in your facility are considered contacts of a case if they are roommates, share bathrooms, share food, share drinks, or are staff in contact with that individual's bodily fluids.
  - Local health department staff will also inquire if the infected individual is a food handler.
  
- ◆ **What information is needed about contacts of a persons infected with hepatitis A?**
  - Local health department staff will inquire about names of close contacts, as well as age or DOB, know history of HepA vaccination, and contact information (e.g., address or phone number).
  - If the contact has been released from your facility, local health department staff will need information on how to contact them outside of the facility.