



Hepatitis A Update for FDOH Region 4

July 2019

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious disease that attacks the liver. People infected with hepatitis A are most contagious from two weeks before onset of symptoms to one week afterwards. Not everyone who is infected will have the symptoms. Symptoms usually start within 28 days of exposure to the virus with a range of 15-50 days. Symptoms include: jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), fever, diarrhea, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, stomach pain, dark-colored urine and pale or clay colored stool.

Hepatitis A infection is a vaccine-preventable illness. The primary mode of hepatitis A virus transmission in the United States is typically person-to-person through the fecal-oral route. The best way to prevent hepatitis A infection is through vaccination. Additionally, practicing good hand hygiene—including thoroughly washing hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food—plays an important role in preventing the spread of hepatitis A. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers do not kill the hepatitis A virus!

Current Situation as of June 30, 2019

Statewide:

- Hepatitis A activity has slightly decreased from last month but remains well above the previous 5-year average since April 2018.
- 355 cases were reported statewide in July 2019.*
- 2,088 cases have been reported statewide so far in 2019.*
- The central Florida region has had the highest hepatitis A activity levels.
- Incidence is highest among adults 30-39 years old. Cases are primarily among men and persons who identify as non-Hispanic white. Non-injection and injection drug use were the most commonly reported risk factors. A smaller proportion of cases also report experiencing homelessness or are men who have sex with men (MSM).
- Hepatitis A commonly leads to hospitalization. From 2018-to-date, approximately 72% of the cases reported in Florida were hospitalized and there have been 31 deaths associated with the infection.

Region 4:

- Three of the top five counties reporting cases from 2018-to-date are from this region: Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco. The other two counties in the top five are Orange and Volusia.
- Cases Reported from 07/01/19-07/31/19*

Citrus: 9	Pasco: 33
Hardee: 0	Pinellas: 33
Hernando: 17	Polk: 4
Hillsborough: 10	Sumter: 9
Total: 115	
- Total Cases Reported in Region 4 year-to-date: 990*

*Current case data from Merlin are preliminary and will change as new information is gathered. The most recent data available are displayed in this report. For more information, please see the monthly Vaccine-Preventable Disease Surveillance Report, available at FlHealth.gov/vpd

What DOH is doing:

- Florida Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees [declared a Public Health Emergency](#) to address the increase in Hepatitis A cases in Florida due to the current national outbreak. The declaration builds upon the [Public Health Advisory](#) that was issued by the Florida Department of Health on November 18, 2018 and reemphasizes the importance of the Hepatitis A vaccination as the best way to prevent Hepatitis A infection. The Public Health Emergency also expands upon those considered high risk for targeted vaccination to those most at risk for contracting hepatitis A as well as those who are at a high risk of suffering serious complications from contracting hepatitis A, such as those with underlying liver disease.
- Targeted vaccination efforts - The Florida Department of Health is actively working to vaccinate those most at risk for hepatitis A infection. In recent months, the number of first doses of hepatitis A vaccine administered by both private providers and county health departments to adults age 18 years and older, as recorded in Florida SHOTS, remained well above the previous 5-year average. Since September 2018, an additional 145,060 doses were administered compared to previous years.
- Targeted education and outreach events continue throughout the region at community meetings, jails, drug treatment facilities, food banks and homeless shelters, among others.
- All County Health Departments offer the hepatitis A vaccine and some are offering them for no-cost. Please contact your local health department for more information.
- Ongoing outreach is being provided to health care providers to notify them of the increase in hepatitis A, promote vaccination and appropriate testing and remind them of reporting requirements for diagnosed cases of hepatitis A. Sumter County's Health Department Director, Dr. Zelnick, co-led an informational call to healthcare providers in the region, with Florida Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees, on August 2, 2019.

Additional Resources:

- Florida Department of Health hepatitis A information can be found [here](#).
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hepatitis A information can be found [here](#).
- Florida Department of Health Weekly Morbidity Statistics Report can be found [here](#).