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**TO: Substance Use Treatment, Behavioral Health, and Mental Health Facilities; Homeless and Housing Assistance Providers; Board and Care Facilities; Syringe Exchange Programs; Food Pantry Providers; and other programs serving people experiencing homelessness.**

**Subject: PREVENTING HEPATITIS A IN YOUR FACILITIES – Updated May 22, 2019**

**(This communication supersedes previous versions.)**

Large outbreaks of hepatitis A infections are continuing [in multiple states](#) around the nation, affecting people who are homeless and/or who use injection and non-injection drugs. Although there is not currently a hepatitis A outbreak in California, persons in the risk groups may travel to California from states experiencing outbreaks. People may travel to California to enroll in substance use treatment facilities, and may arrive at substance use treatment facilities in the early stages of hepatitis A infection.

Hepatitis A virus causes liver inflammation. It is spread through contaminated food or drink, sexual contact, or touching contaminated objects and then touching the mouth. Hepatitis A virus is shed in feces and people infected with hepatitis A who do not thoroughly wash their hands after defecating can spread the infection to others. Hepatitis A usually has a good prognosis, but severe and even fatal illness can occur in people with underlying health conditions, particularly those with chronic liver diseases such as alcoholic cirrhosis, and hepatitis B and hepatitis C infection. **Hepatitis A vaccine and thorough hand hygiene can prevent the disease.**

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) strongly recommends your facility follow the steps below to help prevent the spread of hepatitis A:

**Routinely offer hepatitis A vaccine** onsite if possible, or recommend that clients get vaccinated offsite.

- Vaccine Finder (<https://vaccinefinder.org/>) can be used to help clients find a location nearby that stocks hepatitis A vaccine and accepts the client's insurance.
- Your [local health department's Immunization Program](#) can help you identify clinics that offer vaccine at no cost for patients who are uninsured.
- For Medi-Cal patients (Fee for Service or Managed Care), hepatitis A vaccine given in a provider's office or network pharmacy is covered without prior authorization. Call the Plan's member services number (on the back of the patient's Medi-Cal ID card) to locate a network pharmacy and confirm availability of the vaccine in the pharmacy.
- Medi-Cal provides coverage for transportation for medical care, including vaccination. For information, contact the client's Medi-Cal member services department or call 1-800-541-5555.



**Post educational materials concerning Hepatitis A for your clients.** Flyers for printing can be found [here](#) (Click on "Adults" tab, "Hepatitis A" section).

**Remind staff and clients to wash their hands** with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, and before preparing, serving, or eating food. Hand sanitizers are not effective against hepatitis A virus. Post this multilingual [Wash Your Hands](#) poster in bathrooms and kitchens. FREE copies of the poster can be ordered from your [local health department's Immunization Program](#).

Ensure routine and consistent cleaning of bathrooms for staff and clients.

Assess clients for potential signs of hepatitis A infection during and after intake.

- Look for symptoms of fever, fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, yellowing of skin or eyes, stomach pain, vomiting, dark urine, pale stools, and diarrhea.
- Refer people with signs of hepatitis A for medical evaluation.
- Report any suspected cases of hepatitis A to your [local health department's Communicable Disease Program](#) right away.

Everyone can play a role in addressing this significant public health threat. Thank you for your help in preventing the spread of hepatitis A. For more information about preventing the spread of hepatitis A for your staff and clients, contact [your local health department](#) or visit the [CDC Hepatitis A website](#).