



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES

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Hepatitis A Health Advisory, September 20, 2015

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has been working with Houston Health Department and Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services to investigate transmission of hepatitis A virus (HAV) related to a patient of two healthcare providers. Multiple exposures have likely occurred with at least three identified instances of transmission from patient to healthcare staff, beginning in June of 2015. Because the potential for further transmission exists, DSHS asks that healthcare providers consider hepatitis A in any individuals presenting with jaundice, dark urine, clay-colored stool, unusually elevated liver enzymes, acute onset of abdominal pain, loss of appetite, diarrhea, nausea, and/or vomiting. Patients should be tested for hepatitis A virus IgM antibody (HAV IgM). **Patients with a hepatitis A diagnosis should be reported to the health department within one working day**, per the Texas Administrative Code.

DSHS is also asking that healthcare providers contact their local health department if they have diagnosed hepatitis A in individuals with recent exposure (15-50 days prior to symptom onset) to healthcare settings, either as staff or patient, since May, 2015.

Healthcare providers should use contact precautions when working with patients diagnosed with HAV and always perform good hand hygiene. Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine is effective to prevent disease.

Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver. The incubation period for hepatitis A is approximately 28 days (range 15-50 days). The virus is ingested by mouth from fecal-contaminated food or drink, or through close personal contact with an infected person. Those with the hepatitis A virus are most infectious 2 weeks prior to symptom onset. Symptoms include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal discomfort, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain, and jaundice. Symptoms can last for several weeks and typically do not last more than 2 months. Children under 6 years of age with hepatitis A are often asymptomatic.

To prevent spread, patients should be encouraged to thoroughly wash their hands after visits to the restroom, before touching food or drink, and after changing a baby's diaper. All patients should be kept current with hepatitis A vaccination. Check the vaccination history of all patients and offer vaccine to anyone that is not up to date with the vaccine schedule. **Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine given 6 months apart remains an effective way to prevent disease and outbreaks.**

There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A, only supportive treatment and management of the infection. Post-exposure prophylaxis, either vaccine or immune globulin (IG), may mitigate the exposure in certain groups, however.

- For exposed persons 1-40 years of age, offer vaccine within 2 weeks of exposure.
- For persons <1 or >40, immunocompromised, diagnosed with liver disease, or cannot receive vaccine, provide IG within 2 weeks of exposure.
- Contacts who have received one dose of hepatitis A vaccine at least one month prior to exposure do not need post-exposure prophylaxis.

DSHS and your local health department can assist with identifying exposed individuals, assessing risk, and giving prophylaxis to exposed individuals.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie Graves".

Julie Graves, MD, MPH, PhD, FAAFP