

Hepatitis A in Michigan

Questions and Answers

What is going on?

At this time, Michigan has the biggest outbreak of hepatitis A in the country. Nearly all cases involve adults as many adults have not been vaccinated. Many people have been hospitalized in this outbreak and some have died.

Michigan has a website you can visit to get the facts: Michigan.gov/HepAOutbreak.

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a serious infection in the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus. The virus is a germ that makes you sick and is found in the feces (poop) of people with the infection. The virus gets into your body through your mouth.

Hepatitis A can easily spread from person-to-person. Wash your hands with soap and water to help stop the spread of the virus. People spread the virus before they start to feel sick. Some people may not show signs of illness, but can still pass on the virus and make others sick.

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Symptoms can show up 15-50 days after you come in contact with the hepatitis A virus. You can be sick for weeks or months. Although not all people infected feel sick, people may:

- feel tired all the time
- have aching muscles or joints
- have an upset stomach or throw up
- have stomach pain
- have a fever
- have diarrhea
- have jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eye)
- have dark urine or light-colored feces (poop)
- not feel hungry

Who is at risk and how can they protect themselves?

Anyone who is not protected can get infected with the hepatitis A virus. Some people are at higher risk in this outbreak and should get the hepatitis A vaccine, this includes those who have been homeless or recently incarcerated, those who use drugs, and men who have sex with men. People with chronic liver disease, like hepatitis B or C, can become very sick if infected with the hepatitis A virus and should also get the hepatitis A vaccine.

Can hepatitis A infection be treated?

There is no medicine to treat hepatitis A. You will need rest, fluids, and healthy foods. Sometimes you have to go to the hospital to get better.

If you think you might have hepatitis A, please talk to your health care provider.

What can you do?
There is more!

How do I stay safe from hepatitis A?

The best way to protect yourself is with the hepatitis A vaccine!

Careful hand washing after using the bathroom is also very important to stop the spread of hepatitis A. Because this disease spreads easily, don't share food, drinks, drugs, eating utensils, toothbrushes or towels with others.

Where can I get the hepatitis A vaccine? What if I don't have health insurance?

Call your health care provider, pharmacy, or local health department to get the vaccine.

If you don't have health insurance, you will likely qualify for free or low-cost vaccines at your local health department.

Michigan.gov/HepAOutbreak has information about how to contact your local health department.

Why should I get the hepatitis A vaccine?

Many adults in Michigan have not gotten the hepatitis A vaccine, which leaves them in danger of getting hepatitis A. Thankfully, most children in Michigan have been vaccinated for hepatitis A. If you don't have a record of your vaccines, ask your health care provider or local health department if they have it. Your vaccine record may be in the Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MCIR). Those who are at highest risk in this outbreak should be sure they are vaccinated, including those who are homeless or recently incarcerated, those who use drugs, men who have sex with men, and people with chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis B and C.

It is okay to repeat vaccines if you can't find your record. The hepatitis A vaccine has been used for over 20 years and has proven to be both safe and very good at protecting people. Nine out of 10 adults will be protected after one dose of vaccine, and nearly all adults will be protected after getting both doses. Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine should be given at least 6 months apart. Also, the protection from the hepatitis A vaccine is long-lasting.

If you know that you came into contact with the virus, hepatitis A vaccine can prevent the disease if given within 14 days of being exposed.

What can I expect from the hepatitis A vaccine?

Like any medication, vaccines may cause side effects, including soreness, swelling, or redness where the shot was given. This should go away within a few days. Use or exercise the arm where the vaccine was given to help relieve soreness. You can also use a cold pack or cloth for 5-10 minutes at a time.

Who should not get the hepatitis A vaccine?

Some people should not get this vaccine. If you have a serious allergy to a component of the hepatitis A vaccine, you may be told not to get the vaccine. Your health care provider or local health department can help you.

How is hepatitis A different from hepatitis B or hepatitis C?

All three are serious liver infections that are caused by different viruses. They hurt the liver and keep it from working well.

Hepatitis **A** is caused by the hepatitis A virus. It is passed from person-to-person through fecal matter (poop). Unlike hepatitis B and hepatitis C, it does not become chronic (long-term). Hepatitis A vaccine is available to prevent.

Hepatitis **B** is caused by the hepatitis B virus. It is passed from person-to-person through blood and body fluids, like semen or vaginal fluids. Most often it is passed through sexual contact or from an infected mother to her baby during birth. Hepatitis B vaccine is available to prevent. Most children receive hepatitis B vaccine during childhood.

Hepatitis **C** is caused by the hepatitis C virus. It is passed from person-to-person by blood. It is most often passed when a person's blood comes into direct contact with infected blood. No vaccine available to prevent.