

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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NEWS RELEASE

Hepatitis A outbreak has spread in Northern Alabama

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) continues investigating multiple hepatitis A cases in Jackson and DeKalb counties. This outbreak may continue to spread to other surrounding counties. Persons at highest risk for hepatitis A include users of illegal drugs, homeless/transient persons, the family and close contacts of any persons with hepatitis A, and persons who participate in anal/oral sex including men who have sex with men. Other people can become infected with the hepatitis A virus by contact with contaminated food, drink and objects from an infected person. There is an effective vaccine to reduce the risk of getting hepatitis A.

“As the outbreak continues to grow, we need to make sure everyone knows the importance of getting vaccinated and handwashing,” said Medical Officer Dr. Karen Landers.

Hepatitis A can spread easily among unvaccinated people, if good handwashing practices are not followed. ADPH emphasizes that individuals who may be experiencing homelessness, using recreational drugs, sharing drugs or drug paraphernalia, having spent time in jail or prison, or men having sex with men need to be vaccinated against hepatitis A. In addition, anyone who wishes to be protected against hepatitis A should get vaccinated.

After being exposed to someone sick with hepatitis A, symptoms may appear from 15 to 50 days later. Symptoms may include fever, headache, fatigue, low appetite, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, dark urine or jaundice. If you, your family, or friends are experiencing any of these symptoms, after contact with an infected person or with someone who participates in the behaviors listed above, they should contact their healthcare provider as soon as possible.

To reduce the spread of hepatitis A disease:

- Get vaccinated.
- Wash hands:
 - Before, during and after preparing food
 - After using the toilet
 - After changing diapers or cleaning up a person who has used the toilet
 - After touching garbage
 - Before eating food
 - Before and after caring for someone who is sick

- Do not share drug paraphernalia, cigarettes, food, drinks, eating utensils, towels or toothbrushes.

For more information, visit alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization/assets/hepatitisaflyer.pdf or contact the ADPH Immunization Division at (334) 206-5023 or toll free at 800-469-4599.

1/9/19