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## Maine Health Alert Network (HAN) System

### PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

**To:** Medical Providers, Clinicians, Hospitals, City and County Health Organizations, Healthcare, Physician Practices, Vulnerable Population Organizations

**From:** Dr. Siiri Bennett, State Epidemiologist

**Subject:** **Confirmed Hepatitis A case in an individual who stayed in Portland shelters**

**Date / Time:** Monday, October 29, 2018 at 8:30am

**Pages:** 2

**Priority:** **High**

**Message ID:** 2018PHALT002

**Abstract:**

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) confirmed a hepatitis A case in a person who is experiencing homelessness in Portland, Maine. The case stayed overnight at Oxford Street Shelter and Florence House, and spent time during the day at Preble Street Resource Center during their infectious period, which was October 1<sup>st</sup> through October 21<sup>st</sup>.

This case is of concern because several states in the U.S. are experiencing large outbreaks of Hepatitis A infections, especially among persons experiencing homelessness and persons who use drugs. Maine CDC will be holding a free hepatitis A vaccination clinic at the Preble Street Resource Center located at 38 Preble Street in Portland for anyone who stayed at one of these shelters or used the Resource Center during this time. Maine CDC's Public Health Nursing Program will be administering hepatitis A vaccine at Preble Street on Wednesday, October 31, 2018, from 8:00am to 1:00pm, and on Thursday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 from 12:00pm to 4:00pm.

Medical providers across the state should routinely identify and vaccinate people who are at an increased risk of hepatitis A: people experiencing homelessness, people who use drugs, and men who have sex with men.

# Confirmed Hepatitis A case in an individual who stayed in Portland shelters

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) confirmed a hepatitis A case in a person who is experiencing homelessness in Portland, Maine. The case stayed overnight at Oxford Street Shelter and Florence House, and spent time during the day at Preble Street Resource Center during their infectious period, which was October 1<sup>st</sup> through October 21<sup>st</sup>.

This case is of concern because several states in the U.S. are experiencing outbreaks of Hepatitis A infections, especially among persons experiencing homelessness and persons who use drugs. In response to this situation, Maine CDC is holding a free hepatitis A vaccination clinic at the Preble Street Resource Center located at 38 Preble Street in Portland for anyone who stayed at one of these shelters or used the Resource Center during this time. Maine CDC's Public Health Nursing Program will be administering hepatitis A vaccinations at Preble Street on Wednesday, October 31, 2018, from 8:00am to 1:00pm, and on Thursday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 from 12:00pm to 4:00pm.

Maine CDC is asking medical providers across the state to routinely identify and vaccinate people who are at an increased risk of hepatitis A including:

- people experiencing homelessness,
- people who use drugs, and
- men who have sex with men (MSM).
- Persons with chronic liver disease
- International travelers to hepatitis A virus endemic areas.

Suspect cases should be tested for hepatitis A IgM and reported to Maine CDC immediately at 1-800-821-5821 or by fax to 1-800-293-7534

Maine sees an average of eight cases of hepatitis A each year and currently has seen 5 cases so far in 2018. Hepatitis A is reportable in Maine. Providers with suspected cases should report them to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821.

**Symptoms:** Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable, contagious liver disease that is caused by a virus. Symptoms can range from mild illness to a severe sickness that requires hospitalization and can last several months. Most adults with hepatitis A have sudden onset of symptoms, such as fatigue, low appetite, stomach pain, nausea, dark urine and jaundice, that usually resolve within 2 months of infection; most children less than 6 years of age do not have symptoms or have an unrecognized infection. Antibodies produced in response to hepatitis A infection last for life and protect against reinfection. The best way to prevent hepatitis A infection is to get vaccinated.

**Transmission:** Hepatitis A can be spread person-to-person through the sharing of personal items such as cups, utensils, towels, toothbrushes, cigarettes, pipes, syringes and sexual contact. Hepatitis A virus is easily spread from person to person in areas where sanitary conditions and personal hygiene practices are poor. Hepatitis A can also be spread through contaminated food or water, especially in food prepared by a person who is infected. In the United States, hepatitis A is responsible for approximately 100 deaths annually.

Additional information on hepatitis A is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm>