Maine CDC Health Advisory

Additional cases of hepatitis A in Aroostook County

June 21, 2019

The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) has identified three additional cases of hepatitis A virus infection in Aroostook County since the last [update](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/health-advisory.shtml?id=1312212) on June 18, 2019. There is now a total of nine confirmed hepatitis A cases in Aroostook County since May 17, 2019. All nine cases are linked to exposures at a restaurant in Caribou. There is no ongoing risk to the public from eating at this restaurant, nor is there any ongoing risk to the public as a result of the original case.

Close contacts of affected individuals have been notified and Maine CDC is closely monitoring these cases. However, symptoms of hepatitis A can take weeks to develop. Health care providers are encouraged to remain vigilant for hepatitis A infection.

Anyone who visited this restaurant is now outside the window for which post-exposure prophylaxis is recommended but should watch for symptoms and seek medical attention if symptoms develop.

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable, contagious liver disease caused by a virus. Symptoms range from mild illness to a severe sickness that requires hospitalization and can last several months. Most adults with hepatitis A have a sudden onset of symptoms such as tiredness, low appetite, stomach pain, nausea, dark urine, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Most children younger than six years of age do not have symptoms or have an unrecognized infection. If you develop symptoms of hepatitis A, please contact your healthcare provider.

This disease usually spreads when a person ingests the virus from contaminated objects, food, or drinks. It can also spread from close contact with an infected person such as caring for someone who is ill.

Outside of these circumstances, the risk of infection is extremely low. Hepatitis A is not spread through casual contact, such as shaking hands or being in the same room as an infected individual.

The best way to prevent hepatitis A infection is to get vaccinated. Other preventive measures include practicing good hand hygiene – thoroughly washing hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food. We also recommend that all food service workers get vaccinated for hepatitis A.

Maine CDC Public Health Nurses have assisted local medical facilities to administer hepatitis A vaccine, and the Maine CDC Immunization Program has provided hepatitis A vaccine to Aroostook County health care facilities.

Maine CDC will continue to post periodic updates on this situation.