

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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****ADVISORY – Important Information****

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TO: Epidemiologists; HIV/STD/Viral Hepatitis - Program Staff; Local Public Health Liaisons; Healthcare; Northern New England Poison Center; Public Health

FROM: Dr. Sheila Pinette, Maine CDC Director
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SUBJECT: **Post-exposure Prophylaxis for Individuals Exposed to Hepatitis A Virus**

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Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)

Post-exposure Prophylaxis for Individuals Exposed to Hepatitis A Virus

Background: Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) is investigating a case of acute hepatitis A virus infection in Cumberland County. The case prepared food for two group events held in Androscoggin County on Saturday, September 28: a fundraiser dinner at the Durham Friends Meetinghouse and a women's group luncheon affiliated with the meetinghouse. Maine CDC attempted to contact most of the meal attendees, but the events were also open to the public. Individuals who consumed food at either event are recommended to receive post-exposure prophylaxis as soon as possible and up to 14 days after exposure. The last day of the prophylaxis period is Saturday, October 12, 2013. The case was also associated with a preschool in Cumberland County while infectious; however, the preschool exposure was outside the window of opportunity for prophylaxis to be effective. Persons associated with the preschool were provided with a letter and recommended to consult their primary care provider if they develop symptoms of hepatitis A.

Illness caused by hepatitis A virus typically has an abrupt onset and can include fever, malaise, anorexia, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark urine and jaundice. The likelihood of having symptoms with hepatitis A infection is related to age. Hepatitis A can result in mild illness in children, and many will be asymptomatic. Among older children and adults, infection typically is symptomatic, and can range in severity from mild to life-threatening. The average incubation period for hepatitis A is 28 days (range 15-50 days). Individuals are considered infectious for approximately 2 weeks prior to and 1 week after onset of jaundice. Transmission is by the fecal-oral route or through consumption of contaminated food or water. Persons exposed to hepatitis A can receive post-exposure prophylaxis up to 14 days after exposure. Persons exposed who are now beyond the period where post-exposure prophylaxis may be offered should watch for symptoms and see their health care provider as soon as possible if symptoms develop.

Recommendations:

- Area health care providers are encouraged to consider hepatitis A infection in persons with symptoms consistent with hepatitis.
- For suspected cases of acute hepatitis A, obtain serum hepatitis A IgM and liver enzymes.
- All cases of suspected viral hepatitis should be reported immediately by phone to the Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821. Epidemiologists are available to provide guidance on post-exposure prophylaxis with either hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin.
- Persons who recently have been exposed to HAV and who have not previously received two doses of hepatitis A vaccine should be administered a single dose of single-antigen hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG) (0.02 mL/kg) as soon as possible.
 - For healthy persons aged 12 months–40 years, single-antigen hepatitis A vaccine at the age-appropriate dose is preferred.
 - For persons aged >40 years, IG is preferred.
 - Vaccine can be used if IG cannot be obtained.
 - For children aged <12 months, immunocompromised persons, persons who have had chronic liver disease diagnosed, and persons for whom vaccine is contraindicated, IG should be used.

For More Information:

- General information on hepatitis A virus can be found on the Maine CDC website <http://www.mainepublichealth.gov> or the federal CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov>.
- Information on the prevention of hepatitis A after exposure is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5641a3.htm>.