



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

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Statewide News Release

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State Health Department Recommends Hepatitis A Vaccination for Children & Adults in Counties Impacted By Outbreak

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 16, 2018) – Due to an ongoing outbreak of Hepatitis A, the Department for Public Health (DPH) within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), is recommending vaccination for everyone residing Jefferson, Bullitt, Hardin, Greenup, Carter and Boyd counties.

To date, 214 cases have been reported in the Jefferson County/Louisville area. Bullitt, Hardin, Greenup, Carter and Boyd counties have each reported 5 or more cases for a total 311 cases associated with the outbreak. One death has been reported.

“Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable illness. DPH recommends all children, ages 1 year through 18, receive the Hepatitis A vaccine as well as adults who want to protect themselves from an acute hepatitis A infection,” said Dr. Jeffrey Howard, acting DPH commissioner. “In these counties with local transmission of the hepatitis A virus, we recommend everyone be vaccinated per guidelines to help stop this outbreak.”

For adults, the hepatitis A vaccine is typically given in two doses — an initial vaccination followed by another shot six months later. DPH recommends that all people in outbreak counties consult with their primary care doctor or insurance carrier regarding an in-network provider for administration of the hepatitis A vaccine. The Center for Disease and Control (CDC) recommends vaccination for people who wish to be protected against hepatitis A infection. For insured people, the hepatitis A vaccine should not require any out-of-pocket costs as long as policies are compliant with the federal Affordable Care Act.

Since 2006, the CDC has recommended children receive the hepatitis A vaccine series. Effective July 1, 2018, all Kentucky students in kindergarten through 12th grade must receive two doses of the Hepatitis A vaccine to attend school or receive a provisional certificate of immunization (unless their parents claim an exemption).

Signs and symptoms of Hepatitis A include jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes), dark-colored urine, fatigue, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhea and fever. The virus is found in the stool of people infected with Hepatitis A and typically spread from person to person contact. The disease often is transmitted when people do not wash their hands properly or do not have access to proper sanitation. DPH recommends individuals wash their hands often and particularly after using the restroom or before consuming food. Hand sanitizer should be used only when soap and water is unavailable.

While the current hepatitis A outbreak is occurring primarily within specific at-risk populations, including people who use illicit drugs (both injection and non-injection) and the homeless, through person-to-person transmission. Approximately, 30 percent of cases do not report any risk factors. Therefore, it is recommended that children and adults in counties with local transmission of the virus as part of this outbreak receive the hepatitis A vaccine.

Hepatitis A vaccine is widely available at local pharmacies and health care providers. For additional information on the hepatitis A vaccination, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/afaq.htm#E1>.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services, the Department for Public Health, and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.