



EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AGENCY
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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*To ensure timely,
compassionate and quality
emergency and disaster
medical services.*



Health Services
<http://ems.dhs.lacounty.gov>

October 6, 2017

HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY
NEW MESSAGE FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR
MARIANNE GAUSCHE-HILL, MD

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has notified the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency of an outbreak of Hepatitis A amongst our homeless population or others at risk for Hepatitis A infections.

Hepatitis A virus is spread by oral contamination with feces which occurs when a person puts their contaminated hand in their mouth. Although Hepatitis A can be transmitted by contaminated food, this outbreak is due to person-to-person transmission which can be prevented by PPE and good hand hygiene practices.

At this time we recommend that all EMS Provider Agencies and Police Departments notify their staff who have direct contact with individuals from the identified population, of this outbreak and the recommendation for vaccination of high risk groups as identified below. Hand hygiene should be a part of daily clinical care both for the protection of the provider and the patient/client. These same practices are important for law enforcement personnel to follow to prevent exposure to disease.

In addition to appropriate hand hygiene and standard infection control precautions, the LA County EMS Agency in collaboration with Public Health recommend that all fire/EMS and public safety field personnel who have direct contact with homeless people and/or active drug users be vaccinated either through their department's occupational health as resources allow, or through their private physician offices/ insurance carrier's clinics.

In addition, each EMS provider and law enforcement agency should alert their personnel to the CDC recommendations on who should be vaccinated against Hepatitis A. These are the same as those recommended in the latest Public Health guidance as well as our previous letter outlining high risk groups for Hepatitis A infection:

- **Persons who live/work in a community with a high rate of Hepatitis A (HAV) [This includes public safety and EMS/Fire Personnel]**
- For men having sex with other men.
- For drug users.
- Travelers to countries with high rates of Hepatitis A.
- Persons with chronic liver disease.
- Persons who receive blood products to help your blood clot (e.g. Hemophilia).
- Persons working with HAV-infected animals or work with HAV in research setting.

County employees may also obtain vaccinations at the following sites:

- Pharmacies
Please go to publichealth.lacounty.gov to find a pharmacy that offers hepatitis A vaccine near you. If you seek vaccination at a pharmacy, make sure to call ahead to ensure that the vaccine is in stock, and that the pharmacy will accept your County insurance.
- Public Health Clinics
Please go to publichealth.lacounty.gov for a listing of locations and hours; vaccination is free for at-risk County employees.

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The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the following best practice related to hand hygiene and use of gloves for health care providers:

When and How to Wear Gloves

- Wearing gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene. Dirty gloves can soil hands.
- Always clean your hands after removing gloves.
- Steps for Glove Use:
 1. Choose the right size and type of gloves for the task
 2. Put on gloves before touching a patient's non-intact skin, open wounds or mucous membranes, such as the mouth, nose, and eyes
 3. Change gloves during patient care if the hands will move from a contaminated body-site (e.g., perineal area) to a clean body-site (e.g., face)
 4. Remove gloves after contact with a patient and/or the surrounding environment (including medical equipment) using proper technique to prevent hand contamination. Failure to remove gloves after caring for a patient may lead to the spread of potentially deadly germs from one patient to another
 5. Do not wear the same pair of gloves for the care of more than one patient

When Should an EMS providers and Law Enforcement Personnel Use Alcohol Based Sanitizers or Wash Hands

- Before eating
- Before and after having direct contact with a patient's intact skin (taking a pulse or blood pressure, performing physical examinations, lifting the patient in bed)
- After contact with blood, body fluids or excretions, mucous membranes, non-intact skin, or wound dressings
- After contact with inanimate objects (including medical equipment) in the immediate vicinity of the patient
- If hands will be moving from a contaminated-body site to a clean-body site during patient care
- After glove removal
- After using a restroom

When using alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- Put product on hands and rub hands together
- Cover all surfaces until hands feel dry
- This should take around 20 seconds

For the latest updates and recommendations please visit the EMS Agency website at:

<http://ems.dhs.lacounty.gov>.

Under **Important Notice** on the landing page is an area listed as **Hepatitis A Update**. You can click on this to be linked to the most current information from the Department of Public Health. If you have specific questions please send them to HepAinfo@dhs.lacounty.gov and EMS Agency staff will get back to you with a response.