



VCEMS Training Bulletin



Bulletin 045

Date: 11/03/2017

Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) – Prehospital Responder Safety Bulletin

Hepatitis A virus (HAV) outbreaks in persons who are homeless and/or use illicit (injection and non-injection) drugs are currently occurring in San Diego, Los Angeles, and Santa Cruz. Currently, there is one confirmed case in Ventura County that is associated with other affected counties, however there is no known transmission of HAV that has occurred in Ventura County. The virus is primarily being transmitted person-to-person through close contact or through contact with a fecally contaminated environment. Early signs and symptoms of HAV include nausea, loss of appetite, fever, malaise, or abdominal pain.

Though primarily relegated to “high-risk” individuals engaged in illicit drug use or patients who are homeless / recently homeless, there have been two (2) confirmed cases of transmission from an infected person to a prehospital responder. To this end, VCEMS would like to offer some tips on how to limit exposure to HAV, thus mitigating the risk of transmission to prehospital responders.

- Maintain a heightened sense of awareness when responding to 911 calls involving transient/potential transient individuals, or when patients are suspected of using illicit drugs (injection and non-injection).
- Utilize appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) on all medical calls. Proper PPE for the purposes of HAV transmission include gloves, goggles and mask.
- Ensure medical and transport equipment is appropriately cleaned with a virucidal agent after each patient contact, regardless of whether or not that patient was considered “high-risk” for HAV.
- Contact your primary care physician or your agency’s occupational health department to check your HAV vaccination status.
- If you are unvaccinated, or are otherwise not able to verify your vaccination status, work with your primary care provider or occupational health department to get vaccinated.

VCEMS is working with VCPH and other regional and state agencies to make sure that the information and resources being provided to you are accurate and up to date. As additional information becomes available, we will be sure to distribute it to all system participants.

Additional Resources:

Public Health Advisory for HAV Outbreak in California Counties

http://www.vchca.org/images/public_health/For_Hlth_Care_Providers/HAV_Advisory_101017.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Hepatitis A Information for Healthcare Providers:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hepa/hcp/index.html>

CDC, Hepatitis A Questions and Answers for Health Professionals:

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/havfaq.htm>

CDC, Hepatitis A General Fact Sheet (for patients):

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/pdfs/hepageneralfactsheet.pdf>

Why Should You Care About the Hepatitis A Virus (HAV)?

If a person is infected with HAV, it can very easily spread from person-to-person and cause liver disease lasting a few weeks to a serious illness that lasts several months. In some cases, people can die because of Hepatitis A.

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