

Public Health Advisory

Date: October 10, 2017

To: Employees and Volunteers Serving the Population at Risk for Hepatitis A

From: Robert Levin, MD, Ventura County Public Health Officer

Subject: Hepatitis A Vaccination Recommendation

Background:

San Diego, Santa Cruz, and Los Angeles Counties are currently experiencing outbreaks of hepatitis A infection, mostly among homeless persons and/or users of injection or non-injection illicit drugs. Case numbers in these counties continue to rise, and additional cases due to the same strain of virus have been identified in other California jurisdictions as well as in Arizona and Utah. In San Diego, 461 cases with 17 deaths have occurred due to this hepatitis A outbreak, and the majority of infected individuals have required hospitalization.

We have identified four cases of hepatitis A in our county to date this year; none appear to be related to the outbreak. However, given our proximity to Los Angeles County, there is a chance that we will have hepatitis A cases linked to the outbreak in our county. Most of the hepatitis A cases share one or more of the following characteristics: illicit drug use (injection and non-injection), homelessness, and/or dense living conditions. There have been cases in people whose only risk factor is contact with the transient population. Therefore, it is advisable for occupational groups working closely with the homeless population be vaccinated against hepatitis A.

Recommendation:

As the Ventura County Public Health Officer, I am recommending that hepatitis A vaccination be offered to all employees and volunteers who have close contact with the homeless population and illicit drug users as well as individuals who have close contacts with these groups.

Hepatitis A exposure in a non-vaccinated individual:

Should an employee or volunteer who is not immune to hepatitis A come in close contact with a confirmed or suspected HAV case, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) should be given. Serologic testing for HAV immunity is not recommended prior to vaccination. The employee or volunteer should seek care with their personal physician.

If you have questions or need additional information regarding HAV vaccination, please call contact our Communicable Disease Office at (805) 981-5201, or visit our webpage at www.vchca.org/ph. Thank you.