



Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services  
**HEALTH ALERT NETWORK**  
 Advisory

NEBRASKA  
 Good Life. Great Mission.  
 DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



DATE: November 8, 2019

TO: Healthcare Providers and Public Health

RE: **Increased Number of Hepatitis A Cases in the Metro Omaha Area**

FROM: Thomas J. Safranek, MD                      Adi Pour, PhD  
 State Epidemiologist                              Health Director  
 Nebraska DHHS                                      Douglas County Health Department  
 PHONE: 402-471-2937

**Background**

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Douglas County Health Department, and Three Rivers Public Health Department are investigating a cluster of Hepatitis A cases in the Omaha metro area. Five cases have been reported in the past 3 weeks, with symptom onset between October 15 and November 5. We are requesting your help to identify additional cases. **Please consider Hepatitis A in patients with compatible symptoms, order appropriate lab testing (below), and notify your local health department of any suspected cases.**

Hepatitis A is a viral infection with fecal-oral transmission and an incubation period of approximately 30 days. Children often do not have symptoms but symptomatic cases can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months. Symptoms include:

**Clinical Presentation**

- fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, and/or joint pain
- severe stomach pains and diarrhea (mainly in children)
- jaundice (yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements).

**Diagnosis and testing**

**Clinicians should obtain HAV IgM serology testing for all suspected cases through commercial laboratories.** A positive IgM could be difficult to interpret if the patient recently received an HAV vaccine, and clinicians should rely on liver function tests and clinical symptoms to differentiate.

**Transmission and Special Populations**

The virus is transmitted primarily by the fecal-oral route by either person-to-person contact or ingestion of contaminated food or water. Classic scenarios involve transmission from food products contaminated by symptomatic food handlers not practicing good hand hygiene. Less frequently, HAV may also be transmitted by sexual contact, shared needles, and transfusions. Individuals are considered most contagious during the 2 weeks before and 1 week after onset of symptoms.



**Those diagnosed with hepatitis A or persons symptomatic after a known exposure should not work or prepare food for one week after symptoms begin and until symptoms are gone for >24 hours.**

Infections can occur among persons of all ages. Individuals who previously had Hepatitis A are considered immune to the virus. Those vaccinated for HAV—though much less likely to contract the virus—can still be infected.

Immunocompromised individuals and pregnant woman are at increased risk of complications.

**Treatment**

There is no specific treatment for Hepatitis A virus except for supportive care of pain and fever as needed. **Post-exposure prophylaxis should be considered for individuals with a significant exposure as soon as possible, but not longer than 2 weeks after the last exposure. The local health department can assist with accessing post-exposure prophylaxis.**

**Reporting Cases**

All hepatitis A cases should be reported to your local health department. In Douglas County, please call (402) 444-7214 to report cases. For Saunders, Dodge, and Washington Counties, please call (402) 727-5396. Contact information for other local health departments is available at <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Local-Health-Departments.aspx>). The contact for Nebraska DHHS is Blake Hendrickson (402-471-6450).

Additional information on Hepatitis A is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HAV/index.htm>

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact your local health department or Blake Hendrickson at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services at 402-471-6450.