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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN SANTA ROSA COUNTY RECOMMENDS HEPATITIS A VACCINE FOR THOSE AT HIGH-RISK



Contact:

Debbie Stilphen, PIO
PIO.CHD57@flhealth.gov
850-564-2275

Milton, FL – In response to the Hepatitis A outbreak being experienced across the state, the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County (DOH-Santa Rosa) is recommending that individuals at high-risk for contracting the disease receive the Hepatitis A vaccine. Individuals at high-risk include:

- Persons who are in close contact, care for, or live with someone who has Hepatitis A (HAV)
- Persons who use recreational drugs (injection or non-injection)
- Persons who are homeless or in temporary housing
- Persons who have been recently incarcerated
- Men who have sex with men
- Persons who have recently visited a country where HAV is common
- Persons who are having sex with someone who has HAV
- Persons with liver disease or blood-clotting disorders

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a virus that infects the liver. It is spread when a person unknowingly ingests the virus from objects, food, or drinks contaminated with small, undetected amounts of feces from someone infected with the disease. Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Diarrhea
- Clay-colored stools
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)

Most people who get Hepatitis A feel sick for several weeks but recover without permanent liver damage. In rare cases, HAV can be serious and even lead to death. This is more common in people over 50 and in people with other liver diseases. The best way to prevent the disease is through vaccination. It is also important to wash your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food.

HAV in Santa Rosa County

According to DOH-Santa Rosa epidemiologist Erika Cathey, since January 1, 2019, Santa Rosa County has reported 6 confirmed cases of Hepatitis A. There has been a total of 10 cases since the outbreak began in January 2018.

Santa Rosa has been designated as a high-risk county for Hep A since early January 2019. A high-risk county is one that has had at least 5 cases not acquired in another state or country since January 2018, one of which has occurred in the last 50 days.

DOH-Santa Rosa has been working with community partners to provide the vaccine to high-risk individuals in local jails, drug rehabilitation centers, and the homeless. The Hepatitis A vaccine is also available at the health department at no fee for those at high-risk. Those who do not fall into any of the high-risk categories can receive the vaccine for a fee of \$73.00.

For more information, or to make an appointment to receive the vaccine, contact the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County at 850-983-5200. For more information on Hepatitis A visit the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Web site at <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/afaq.htm>.

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