

HEPATITIS A ALERT

Information for General Practitioners

Please distribute to all staff

Key points:

1. A food handler working at The Star Casino complex in Pyrmont has been notified with hepatitis A
2. A community alert has been issued, advising patrons that the risk is low
3. Some patrons may present for vaccine, with symptoms of hepatitis A, or for advice
4. If you suspect acute viral hepatitis, contact your local public health unit on 1300 066 055

Background

- A food handler who worked at Sokyo restaurant at The Star Casino complex has been diagnosed with hepatitis A.
- The risk to patrons is low. Those at some risk are those that ate on certain dates between 20 September to 8 October 2017.
- Unrelated to this incident, since late July 2017,¹ there have been 28 cases of locally-acquired hepatitis A in NSW. Of these, 13 are in men who have sex with men (MSM). Epidemiological analysis suggests the infection is being spread from person to person through sexual contact locally.

Advice for patients

- Although the risk to Sokyo patrons has been assessed as low, patrons have been advised to watch for symptoms of hepatitis A and to see their doctor if they become unwell.
- Hepatitis A vaccine can prevent disease if given within two weeks of exposure. In some patients normal human immunoglobulin may be indicated – contact your public health unit to discuss.
- Prophylaxis may be provided to non-immune patrons who ate at the venue between 30 September to 8 October 2017, if it can be administered within 14 days of dining.
- People who ate from 20 to 29 September 2017 will not benefit from prophylaxis in relation to this incident.
- However hepatitis A is a safe and effective vaccine. It should routinely be recommended for: travelers to countries where hepatitis A is endemic, MSM, people with chronic liver disease (including hepatitis B and C), child care workers, people with developmental disabilities and their carers, plumbers and sewage workers. Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine at least 6 months apart confer lifetime protection.

Patient investigation

- If patients present with symptoms of hepatitis, investigate as usual, including ordering hepatitis A IgM.
- Advise symptomatic patients to not prepare food or drink, share utensils, or provide personal care for others, share linen or towels, have sex or donate blood until infection is excluded, or if infection is confirmed, until they are no longer infectious (usually 2 weeks after symptom onset - seek PHU advice).
- If you suspect acute viral hepatitis, contact your local public health unit on **1300 066 055** immediately to assist with patient assessment, arrange prophylaxis for their close contacts, and to consider other public health control measures.

¹Notified from 26 July to 12 October 2017