

# HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK UPDATE

Information for SHCs, s100 prescribers & immunology clinics

*Please distribute this information to all staff*

## Key points:

1. Notifications of hepatitis A acquired in NSW continue to increase; most recent cases have been reported in men who have sex with men (MSM)
2. Routinely recommend vaccination to MSM
3. Test patients who HAVE SYMPTOMS of acute viral hepatitis for hepatitis A IgM
4. Notify suspected cases of acute viral hepatitis to your local public health unit immediately so that timely prophylaxis for contacts can be provided

## Summary

There have been 18 cases of locally-acquired hepatitis A in NSW since late July<sup>1</sup>. Of these, eight are in men who have sex with men (MSM), some of whom have visited sex on premises venues during their incubation and/or infectious periods.

Molecular typing indicates that these infections are associated with recent overseas outbreaks of hepatitis A among MSM in Europe (see <https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/vaccination-and-safe-sex-addressing-hepatitis-outbreaks-among-men-who-have-sex-men>). Epidemiological analysis suggests the infection may now be being spread from person to person through sexual contact locally.

## Advice for MSM patients

- MSM are a high risk group for hepatitis A and should be strongly encouraged to get vaccinated ([Australian Immunisation Handbook, section 3.3.10](#))
- Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine at least 6 months apart confer lifetime protection. The vaccine is available by prescription.
- Reduce risk of exposure by hand washing after toileting, before eating, before preparing food or drink, after handling condoms and sex toys/equipment and after sex.

## Patient investigation

- If patients present with symptoms of hepatitis, investigate as usual, including hepatitis A IgM.
- Advise symptomatic patients to not have sex, prepare food or drink or share utensils, provide personal care for others, share linen or towels 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 and to arrange prophylaxis for their close contacts, and to consider other public health control measures.
- Infection can be prevented in contacts of cases if the hepatitis A vaccine (or in special situations immunoglobulin) is administered as soon as possible, and within 2 weeks of first contact - seek public health unit advice.



Dr Vicky Sheppeard  
**Director, Communicable Disease Branch**  
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<sup>1</sup> Notified from 26 July to 14 Sept 2017

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Further Information: [http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Hepatitis\\_A.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Hepatitis_A.aspx)