

HEPATITIS A UPDATE

Information for General Practitioners

Please distribute this information to all staff

Key points:

1. Notifications of hepatitis A acquired in NSW have increased recently
2. Test patients who **HAVE SYMPTOMS** of acute viral hepatitis for hepatitis A IgM
3. Notify suspected cases of acute viral hepatitis to your local public health unit immediately so that timely prophylaxis for contacts can be provided
4. Routinely recommend vaccination to patients who are at risk (listed below)

Summary

There have been twelve confirmed cases of hepatitis A amongst adults in NSW since late July¹. Ten of these cases are locally acquired, which is higher than usual. NSW Health and the Food Authority are investigating the potential sources of this outbreak.

Molecular typing indicates that these infections are from a common source, and that they are also closely related to a recent overseas outbreak of hepatitis A among men who have sex with men in Europe (see <https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/vaccination-and-safe-sex-addressing-hepatitis-outbreaks-among-men-who-have-sex-men>)

Advice for patients

- Travellers to high-risk countries and anyone at higher risk of infection, including men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, sewerage workers and childcare workers, should be encouraged to get vaccinated against hepatitis A. ([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.
- Hand washing after toileting, before eating, before preparing food or drink, after handling condoms and after sex can reduce the spread of hepatitis A. Using condoms can also reduce exposure to hepatitis A.

Patient investigation

- If patients present with symptoms of hepatitis, investigate as usual, including hepatitis A IgM.
- Advise symptomatic patients to not prepare food or drink or share utensils, 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, 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 within 2 weeks of first contact - seek PHU advice.



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¹ Notified from 26 July to 5 September 2017

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Further Information: http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Hepatitis_A.aspx