



Frequently Asked Questions

About the Suburban Cook County
Hepatitis A Vaccination Campaign

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable, communicable disease of the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). It is usually transmitted person-to-person through the fecal-oral route and consumption of contaminated food or water. Hepatitis A is usually a self-limited disease that does not result in chronic infection, however severe complications can occur. The hepatitis A case-fatality rate among persons of all ages with reported cases was approximately 0.3 and up to 1.8% among adults over age 50.

Why is CCDPH planning on vaccinating high-risk groups against hepatitis A?

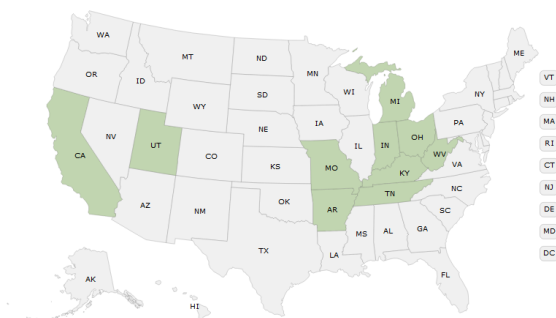
States bordering Illinois and across the country are experiencing hepatitis A outbreaks. To prevent an outbreak of hepatitis A in Illinois, health departments across the state are encouraging high-risk populations to get vaccinated against hepatitis A.

The best way to prevent hepatitis A infection and spread is to broadly vaccinate high-risk populations. CCDPH will work with community partners to provide vaccinations through the Illinois Department of Public Health to most-at-risk groups, including people who:

- Use drugs (IV, non-IV)
- Are homeless or live in transient housing
- Are a man who has sex with men (MSM)
- Were recently incarcerated
- Have close contact with an infected person

What is CDC doing in response to hepatitis A outbreaks across the U.S.?

Since March 2017, CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH) has been assisting several state and local health departments with hepatitis A outbreaks [spread through person-to-person contact](#), that have occurred primarily among persons who use injection and non-injection drugs, and/or persons who are homeless, and their close direct contacts.



Select a State Go



As you can see from the map, there are outbreaks of hepatitis A in states surrounding Illinois.

How many outbreak-associated hepatitis A cases have been reported in suburban Cook County?

At present, there are no outbreak-associated cases of hepatitis A in suburban Cook County's jurisdiction. The mass-vaccination efforts are intended to prevent an outbreak from occurring.

How many cases of hepatitis A are there in suburban Cook County?

The table below shows the number of hepatitis A cases reported in suburban Cook County between 2013-2017, along with the number of cases reported through the second quarter of 2018.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	5-yr Median	2018-Q2*
Hepatitis A	20	9	12	7	12	12	5

Case counts for communicable diseases are posted on the CCDPH website at:

<http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/data-reports/communicable-diseases/case-counts>

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

Most adults with hepatitis A have symptoms, including fatigue, low appetite, stomach pain, nausea, and jaundice, that usually resolve within 2 months of infection. Most children less than 6 years of age do not have symptoms, or have an unrecognized infection. If symptoms occur, they usually start appearing 4 weeks after exposure, but can occur as early as 2 and as late as 7 weeks after exposure. Symptoms usually develop over a period of several days.

Can hepatitis A be prevented?

Get vaccinated against Hepatitis A.

The best way to prevent hepatitis A is through vaccination with the hepatitis A vaccine. To get the full benefit of the hepatitis A vaccine, more than one shot is needed. The number and timing of these shots depends on the type of vaccine you are given. If you are curious about getting vaccinated against hepatitis A, talk to your regular healthcare provider. If you do not have a regular healthcare provider visit Cook County Health at www.cookcountyhhs.org. If you do not have health insurance, visit www.countycare.com.

Practice good hand hygiene.

Thoroughly wash hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food.

Get the facts about hepatitis A. Learn more at <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/>.

Know your Hepatitis A status.

It will be very important for clinical personnel who may be involved in providing vaccinations to know their hepatitis A status. If you are hepatitis A negative, please understand that it can take a couple of weeks after vaccination for your body to make protective antibodies. The time to vaccinate is now!

How effective is hepatitis A vaccine?

Hepatitis A vaccine is safe and effective. The World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) states that a single dose may be effective against outbreaks. For interim outbreak-specific guidance on hepatitis A vaccine administration, visit the CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/InterimOutbreakGuidance-HAV-VaccineAdmin.htm>.

What else should I know about hepatitis A vaccine?

Two single-antigen hepatitis A vaccines and one combination vaccine are currently licensed in the U.S. All are inactivated vaccines:

Single-antigen hepatitis A vaccines

- [HAVRIX® \(manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline\) \[PDF – 16 pages\]](#)
- [VAQTA® \(manufactured by Merck & Co., Inc\) \[PDF – 18 pages\]](#)

Dual-antigen hepatitis A vaccines

- [TWINRIX® \(manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline\): Combined hepatitis A \(in a lower dosage than single-antigen formulations\) and hepatitis B vaccine. \[PDF – 14 pages\]](#)

Once a person gets hepatitis A, how long are they contagious?

The contagious period begins one to two weeks before symptoms appear, and is minimal about one week after the onset of jaundice. Once you have had Hepatitis A, antibodies produced in response to hepatitis A infection last for life and protect against reinfection.

Can hepatitis A survive outside the body? How long?

Hepatitis A can live outside the body for months, depending on the environmental conditions.

In contaminated food, hepatitis A is killed when exposed to temperatures of >185 degrees F (>85 degrees C) for 1 minute. However, the virus can still be spread from cooked food that is contaminated after cooking. Freezing does not inactivate hepatitis A.

How can hepatitis A be killed or inactivated?

Transmission of hepatitis A to contaminated water is considered rare. Adequate chlorination of water, as recommended in the U.S., kills hepatitis A that enters the municipal water supply.

In the environment, hepatitis A can be killed by cleaning household or other facility surfaces with a freshly prepared solution of 1:1 dilution of household bleach to water.