

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

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April 8, 2018

Dear Florida Healthcare Provider:

Over the past year, multiple counties in Florida have reported an increasing number of hepatitis A (HAV) infections. Since January 2018 up to March 23, 2019 there have been 1166 cases of HAV infection reported statewide. Most Florida counties have reported Hepatitis A infections. Over 90% of these cases have been acquired in Florida. A majority of these cases have been occurring in males (66%), and have been white, non-Hispanic (78%). The median age of cases is 39 years. **Fifty-two percent** of cases had a history of any **drug use**. Twenty-four percent have a history of chronic hepatitis B or C infections. Recent homelessness was documented for 17% of cases.

Hepatitis A is transmitted person-to-person primarily through the fecal-oral route, which may include some types of sexual contact, poor hand hygiene after going to the bathroom or changing diapers, and/or handling objects such as intravenous needles. Hepatitis A can also be spread through food or water contaminated with fecal matter. While most patients with hepatitis A will fully recover, 80% of cases in Florida have required hospitalization.

The Florida Department of Health urges you as a healthcare provider to help in the public health efforts to curb the growing number of cases of Hepatitis A in Florida, especially in at risk groups. As a healthcare provider, you are at the forefront of patient contact. We encourage you to recognize patients in your care that are at risk for hepatitis A infection and also would be recommended for vaccination. Please offer Hepatitis A vaccine to those who have not been vaccinated or do not know their vaccination status.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends hepatitis A vaccination for the following people:

- All children at age 1 year
- Travelers to countries where hepatitis A is common
- People who are experiencing homelessness
- Family and caregivers of adoptees from countries where hepatitis A is common
- Men who have sexual encounters with other men
- Users of recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- People with chronic or long-term liver disease, including hepatitis B or hepatitis C
- People with clotting-factor disorders
- People with direct contact with others who have hepatitis A
- Any person wishing to obtain immunity (protection)

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Please immediately report all cases of hepatitis A to your county health department to ensure a prompt public health response in the prevention of disease among close contacts.

Sincerely,



Carina Blackmore, DVM, PhD, Dipl ACVPM  
Director, Division of Disease Control & Health  
Protection  
State Epidemiologist

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prevention of Hepatitis A Through Active or Passive Immunization: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. *MMWR*. May 19, 2006 / 55(RR07);1-23.