



**PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA**

Central Michigan District Health Department  
*"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"*

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**To: Local News Media**  
**From: Central Michigan District Health Department**  
**RE: Hepatitis A**  
**Release Date: November 22, 2017**

Since August 2016, Southeast Michigan has been experiencing a large outbreak of hepatitis A, consisting of over 500 cases at this time. Unlike most hepatitis A outbreaks, this is not linked to a common source of contaminated food or water. It is passing person-to person through close contact, particularly through drug use, sexual activity, and among household members. Normally, hepatitis A infection is relatively infrequent in most parts of the United States, and most Northern Michigan Counties have at most one or two cases a year.

Prior to this year, Isabella County had not had a case of hepatitis A since 2011. Since September 2017, Isabella County has had four cases of acute hepatitis A and it has been determined that there is a link to the outbreak occurring in Southeast Michigan. One of these four cases did occur in a food handler at Meijer; none of the additional cases have been linked to, or caused by, that case. **Therefore, at this time, Isabella County is experiencing a hepatitis A outbreak and is considered part of the Southeastern Michigan outbreak.**

Handwashing is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of getting hepatitis A and other diseases. "Hepatitis A is spread by the fecal-oral route," states Dr. Jennifer Morse, Medical Director for Central Michigan District Health Department. "This means you can get ill if you eat, drink, or touch your mouth with any food, drink, object, or your hands that may have been in contact with stool (poop) from someone infected with hepatitis A. Washing your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom and before handling or eating food can help prevent this."

Getting vaccinated is another important way to reduce your risk. We highly recommend that the following individuals, who are known to be at high risk for getting hepatitis A, get vaccinated:

- Persons with a history of substance abuse (using both injection and non-injection drugs)
- Persons currently homeless or in transient living

- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Persons incarcerated in correctional facilities (in jail or at risk for being in jail)
- Persons who are in close contact with any of the above risk groups (either through their employment, volunteer work, or social situation)
- Persons with underlying liver disease (while not at higher risk of infection, these individuals are at increased risk of complications)
- Food handlers with one or more of the above risk factors and food handlers in outbreak areas.
- Healthcare workers who care for patients and work in the outbreak areas. This includes healthcare workers in emergency departments, EMS, paramedics, first responders, etc.

You may discuss vaccination options with your employer, physician, pharmacy, or contact the local branch of your health department. Anyone who has been exposed to a person with hepatitis A needs special treatment and should contact their healthcare provider or health department right away. Since 2005, it has been recommended that all children routinely receive the hepatitis A vaccine due to increasing number of cases, often due to outbreaks from contaminated foods.

Not everyone who has hepatitis A will have symptoms; however, most do. Symptoms of hepatitis A can include fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, dark urine, and yellowing of the skin and eyeballs. If you think you have been exposed to hepatitis A and are experiencing these kinds of symptoms, please get medical care right away.

Information on hepatitis A can be found on our website at <https://www.cmdhd.org/hepatitis-a> or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.michigan.gov/hepatitisAoutbreak](http://www.michigan.gov/hepatitisAoutbreak).

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org), LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @CMiDHD.

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