

# Hepatitis A

## Guidance for Hospital Emergency Departments

### What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable communicable disease of the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). Hepatitis A is transmitted person-to-person through the ingestion of food, water, or oral contact with objects contaminated with fecal matter from a Hepatitis A infected person. Hepatitis A is easily spread through close sexual and household contacts, as well as persons who share injection and non-injection drugs. The incubation period of Hepatitis A can be 15-50 days, with an average of 28 days.

### Hepatitis A Outbreak

West Virginia is currently seeing an **increase in Hepatitis A cases**, primarily in Kanawha county. Cases have been linked to a nation-wide outbreak of HAV primarily among homeless or transient individuals and those who use injection or non-injection drugs. Cases in this outbreak have had:

- Hospitalization rates of approximately 70%
- High rates of Hepatitis B and C coinfections

### Who Should be Screened?

- Persons with a **history of substance abuse**
- Persons currently **homeless** or in **transient living**
- **Person with current or recent history of incarceration**
- Men who have sex with men
- Persons with underlying **liver disease**

### What are the symptoms of Hepatitis A?

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea or vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Pale stool
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes)

### What can providers do?

- **Report** all confirmed or suspected Hepatitis A causes to your local health department
- **Inform** patients that someone from the local health department will contact them for follow-up
- **Prevent** Hepatitis A through vaccination, standard precautions, and handwashing
- **Promote** vaccination for those exposed and anyone in a risk group

### For more information, visit:

- [https://dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/viral-hepatitis/pages/hepA\\_outbreak.aspx](https://dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/viral-hepatitis/pages/hepA_outbreak.aspx)
- [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav)
- Or call your local health department