

## Health Alert

### Hepatitis A Increases among At-Risk Persons in Philadelphia: Recommendations for Prevention and Control through Vaccination March 28, 2023

Although Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) activity subsided following outbreaks among at-risk persons in 2019 and 2021, HAV infections are once again increasing in Philadelphia (Figure). A preliminary count of 23 confirmed, locally-acquired HAV cases have occurred since January 2023. Among the HAV cases occurring since January, 15 cases (65%) reported current injection and/or non-injection drug use including 8 cases (35%) who were also experiencing homelessness or unstable housing. Median age of the recent cases was 39 years (range: 26–60 years), and 65% were male. As demonstrated during past HAV outbreaks, HAV vaccination is **the most important strategy** to prevent further increases in HAV.

#### SUMMARY POINTS

- Hepatitis A is increasing in Philadelphia among persons who use drugs and those experiencing homeless.
- Take every opportunity to vaccinate at-risk persons.
- Consider acute HAV infection among patients presenting with compatible symptoms.
- Promptly report acute cases to PDPH.

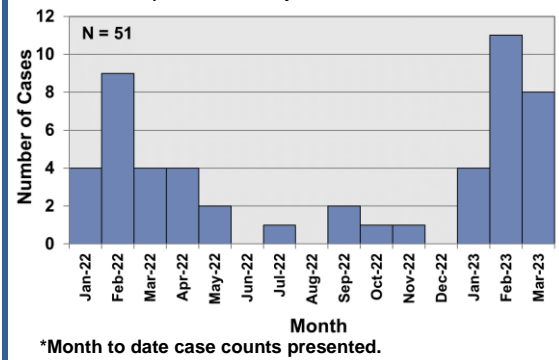
#### **HAV Prevention and Control:**

Providers should use all opportunities to routinely give HAV vaccine to all children at age 12-23 months **as well as the following persons at high risk for exposure to HAV:**

- Persons who use injection or non-injection drugs
- Men who have sex with men
- Persons experiencing homelessness or unstable housing
- Persons who are or were recently incarcerated
- Persons with chronic liver disease
- Persons with HIV

Additionally, any person, regardless of risk factors, who wishes to obtain immunity should be vaccinated.

Increase in Confirmed Acute Hepatitis A Cases, Philadelphia, January 2022 – March 2023



One dose of single-antigen HAV vaccine leads to a protective response in 95% of healthy individuals for up to 11 years. Two doses given at least 6 months apart provide long-lasting immunity. Vaccines for Children (VFC) and Vaccines for Adults at Risk (VFAAR) providers should continue to order HAV vaccine through the PhilaVax inventory module. If your facility does not have HAV vaccine, please encourage patients to visit a pharmacy if they have insurance. Patients should call ahead to make sure that the pharmacy has HAV vaccine. Patients who are uninsured or are having difficulty accessing vaccine can visit a [Philadelphia Department of Public Health \(PDPH\) HAV vaccine clinic](https://www.phila.gov/health/DivisionofDiseaseControl/HAVVaccineClinic). If you have questions about accessing vaccine for adults, contact Kenya Mack [Kenya.Mack@phila.gov](mailto:Kenya.Mack@phila.gov).

**Case ascertainment:** Prompt recognition of HAV is also important to control transmission and allow time-sensitive administration of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to exposed contacts. One dose of single antigen HAV vaccine given within 2 weeks of last exposure can prevent infection in healthy contacts aged ≥12 months who lack HAV immunity and have no HAV vaccine contraindications. ALL confirmed and suspected Hepatitis A cases should be promptly reported to PDPH at 215-685-6740 during regular business hours or 215-686-4514 after-hours. For further information, please see: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/2017March-HepatitisA.htm>.