



MADISON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

To protect, promote and improve the health of our community.

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Media Release

Madison County Health Department Declares Outbreak Status for Hepatitis A Immunization Now Recommended for all Madison Countians

Richmond, KY, October 24, 2018: The Madison County Health Department (MCHD) is now recommending hepatitis A vaccination for everyone in the community as the number of cases in the county, region and throughout the state continues to climb. Madison County now has 24 cases related to the statewide outbreak, which is up to more than 2,050 across Kentucky with 91 counties affected. There have been 14 deaths associated with the outbreak, and more than half of the cases involved hospitalization. The CDC defines an outbreak as an increase, often suddenly, in the number of cases of a disease above what is expected with a population.

Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease that is usually spread when a person unknowingly eats or drinks something contaminated by small amounts of stool from an infected person. Washing your hands with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, changing a diaper or before making food and drinks can help stop the spread of hepatitis A. It can also be transmitted through unprotected sex and using illicit drugs. The vaccine is offered through the MCHD's syringe exchange program.

Since the statewide outbreak began in November 2017, the health department has targeted the hepatitis A vaccine for high-risk populations, including homeless people, people with substance use disorders and people in detention centers. The new recommendation expands vaccination to include all residents of Madison County.

Madison County Public Health Director Nancy Crewe says, "We have always known that Madison County would eventually declare outbreak status due to the nature of the statewide situation which is why we have been so proactive in our efforts to vaccinate the at-risk populations in the county. These efforts should have a mitigating effect on the severity of the outbreak." Crewe continued, "We certainly don't think there is any need for panic, but it is important that we get the word out to our citizens and encourage them to get the vaccine."

MCHD Medical Director Dr. Steve Davis says, "I believe the Health Department's collaboration with other local organizations such as the Salvation Army, the local detention center, sheriff's department and local food banks exemplifies the type of work we are called to do as guardians of the public's health."

The hepatitis A vaccine, given in two doses six months apart, is available from some medical providers and many pharmacies in Madison County and is covered by most insurance plans. The vaccine is also available at the health department's Public Health Clinics by appointment. Call 859-623-7312 or 859-986-1192 to check availability and to schedule an appointment.

Good handwashing can also help control the spread of hepatitis A. Consistent and careful handwashing, including under the fingernails, for at least 20 seconds with soap and water can help stop the spread of the virus. **Please Note:** Hand sanitizer does **not** kill the Hepatitis A virus.

Symptoms of hepatitis A are fatigue, decreased appetite, stomach pain, nausea, darkened urine, pale stools and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Anyone experiencing symptoms should seek medical attention. People may have some or none of these symptoms. People can become ill 15-50 days after being exposed to the virus. Someone sick with hepatitis A is most likely to spread the virus during the 2 weeks before feeling sick and for 1 week after yellow eyes and skin starts. Children often do not exhibit symptoms. Although rare, death can occur from this infection.

If you have further questions, please contact Madison County Health Department PIO Jim Thacker at: (859) 626-4259 or (606) 643-3033.