

## Hepatitis A vaccination clinic offered Tuesday

■ *Clinic will be at health department in Stanton*

SPECIAL TO THE DAILY NEWS

STANTON — Michigan is experiencing a large hepatitis A outbreak that has caused hundreds of illnesses, hospitalizations, and claimed lives. In an effort to help stop the spread, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department will be holding a vaccination clinic.

The clinic will be offered from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday at Montcalm Care Network, 611 N. State St. in Stanton and is open to the public. Those without insurance may qualify for a free or low-cost vaccine. No one will be turned away due to an inability to pay.

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious virus that causes serious liver disease. The hepatitis A virus is found in the feces, or poop, of people infected with Hepatitis A. Currently in Michigan, this virus is spreading person to person, among those who use drugs, the homeless, men who have sex with men, and those who have close contact with these groups.

According to Dr. Jennifer Morse, the medical director of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, you can get hepatitis A by consuming food or water contaminated with the virus, having sex or sharing things with someone who is infected, or just by living with an

infected person.

When someone is exposed to hepatitis A, they usually develop symptoms in 15 to 50 days and are sick for several weeks or months. Not everyone will develop symptoms, but those who do feel tired, have nausea, vomiting, belly pain, loss of appetite, fever, yellowing of the skin or eyes, dark colored urine, pale-colored feces (poop), and joint pain. If you have these symptoms, you should contact your doctor immediately.

People infected with hepatitis A in this outbreak have been very sick. Over 80 percent of those infected have been hospitalized and many have died. For this reason, it is important for all of us to know how to protect ourselves

and others from this infection. Hepatitis A is very contagious, so don't share food, drinks, eating utensils, toothbrushes, towels, drugs, or smoking materials with others. Be sure to wash your hands often, especially after using the restroom and before preparing food. And lastly, if you are at-risk of getting Hepatitis A, get vaccinated.

If you are not able to attend the vaccination clinic, call the health department to make an appointment to get vaccinated at (989) 831-5237. You can also visit the health department's website at [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org) to see a complete list of hepatitis A vaccination clinics offered by the health department and other health departments statewide.