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Hepatitis A continues to spread

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- Michigan is still experiencing a hepatitis A outbreak that has caused hundreds of illnesses, hospitalizations, and claimed lives.

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, Mid-Michigan District Health Department's Medical Director, 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 fifteen to fifty 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 eighty 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, tooth brushes, 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! Call the Mid-Michigan District Health Department to make a vaccination appointment at 989-224-2195 in Clinton County, 989-875-3681 in Gratiot County or 989-831-5237 in Montcalm County. Those without insurance may qualify for a free or low-cost vaccine. No one will be turned away due to an inability to pay.

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.
We take action to protect, maintain and improve the health of our community.
Advancing innovative solutions to achieve healthier outcomes*

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