

This is an official  
**DHEC Health Advisory**

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10431-DAD-05-13-2019-HEPA

## **DHEC Declares Statewide Hepatitis A Outbreak**

### **Summary**

Since the fall of 2018, South Carolina has experienced larger than expected numbers of hepatitis A virus (HAV) infections. An outbreak was initially declared in Aiken County in February 2019, retrospective to November 2018. The number of hepatitis A cases and number of regions reporting cases have continued to increase, and DHEC is therefore declaring a statewide hepatitis A outbreak in South Carolina. This outbreak coincides with a larger national hepatitis A outbreak that started in 2016.

The demographics of the Hepatitis A outbreak in South Carolina have reflected what other states have experienced in their outbreaks. Most of the cases are among men aged 30-49 years old. Cases have occurred at a disproportionately higher rate among four risk groups: (1) persons who use injection or non-injection drugs; (2) persons who are experiencing homelessness; (3) men who have sex with men; and (4) persons who are or recently were incarcerated. In South Carolina, 75% of identified hepatitis A cases have been hospitalized. One death has occurred in relation to HAV infection.

DHEC urges you as a healthcare provider to help in the public health efforts to curb the growing number of cases of hepatitis A in South Carolina, especially in at-risk groups.

This is an update to the Health Alert Network (HAN) advisory released on June 11, 2018, titled *Outbreak of Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) Infections among Persons Who Use Drugs and Persons Experiencing Homelessness* (<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00412.asp>).

### **Background**

Hepatitis A causes acute inflammation of the liver that is transmitted person-to-person primarily through the fecal-oral route, which may include sexual contact, poor hand hygiene after going to the bathroom or changing diapers, or handling shared objects such as drug paraphernalia. Hepatitis A can also be spread through food or water contaminated with fecal matter.

The best protection against HAV infections and outbreaks is through widespread vaccination, particularly among the populations most at risk: injection and non-injection drug users, homeless persons, MSM, people incarcerated or who were recently incarcerated, and people with chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis or hepatitis B or hepatitis C.

## **Recommendations**

### **Vaccination**

#### **Who should be vaccinated against hepatitis A?**

All children are recommended to get two doses of the hepatitis A vaccine beginning at age 12 months. The doses should be spaced six months apart.

Any adult who wishes to obtain immunity may be vaccinated now.

Certain adults who may be at higher risk for hepatitis A infection should be vaccinated, especially:

- People who use injection or non-injection drugs.
- People who are homeless.
- People with a recent history of incarceration.
- Men who have sex with men.
- People with chronic liver disease such as cirrhosis or hepatitis B or C.
- People who are traveling to countries where hepatitis A is common.
- Persons who have close contact such as sexual contact, care for, or live with someone who has hepatitis A.

#### **Where can people get the hepatitis A vaccine?**

Some healthcare facilities that have it available offer the hepatitis A vaccine.

Adults aged 18 years and older in South Carolina can get vaccinated at some local pharmacies without a prescription. Pharmacies can check insurance coverage. To search for a nearby pharmacy that offers vaccines, visit [www.vaccinefinder.org/](http://www.vaccinefinder.org/).

DHEC county health departments also provide hepatitis A vaccine. DHEC has an Adult Vaccine Program that provides low-cost vaccines for uninsured and underinsured individuals 19 years and older at health departments.

DHEC county health departments are providing no cost hepatitis A vaccine to individuals in the at-risk groups: drug users, homeless, recently incarcerated, and men who have sex with men.

To schedule an appointment for vaccination at a DHEC county health department, patients should call (855) 472-3432 or visit [www.scdhec.gov/health/health-public-health-clinics](http://www.scdhec.gov/health/health-public-health-clinics).

## **Post-Exposure Prophylaxis**

Persons who have been exposed recently to HAV and who have not been vaccinated should be vaccinated for post-exposure prophylaxis. They should receive one dose of hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG) as soon as possible, **and within two weeks after exposure**. Guidelines vary by age and health status ([cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6743a5.htm](http://cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6743a5.htm)). The contact information below may be used to consult DHEC on administration of post-exposure prophylaxis.

## **Other Recommendations**

Please immediately report all cases of hepatitis A to your regional epidemiology office to ensure a prompt public health response in the prevention of disease among close contacts.

## **Resources for Additional Information**

1. DHEC Info for Providers – Hepatitis A Outbreak Prevention:  
[www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-012226.pdf](http://www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-012226.pdf)
2. DHEC Public Health Clinic Appointments:  
[www.scdhec.gov/health/health-public-healths-clinics](http://www.scdhec.gov/health/health-public-healths-clinics)
3. CDC Hepatitis A Q&A for Health Professionals:  
[cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/havfaq.htm](http://cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/havfaq.htm)
4. ACIP Hepatitis A Vaccine Recommendations:  
[cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/hepa.html](http://cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/hepa.html)

## **DHEC contact information for reportable diseases and reporting requirements**

Reporting of **Hepatitis A** is consistent with South Carolina Law requiring the reporting of diseases and conditions to your state or local public health department. (State Law # 44-29-10 and Regulation # 61-20) as per the DHEC 2019 List of Reportable Conditions available at: <https://www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-009025.pdf>

Federal HIPAA legislation allows disclosure of protected health information, without consent of the individual, to public health authorities to collect and receive such information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease. (HIPAA 45 CFR §164.512).

## Regional Public Health Offices – 2019

Mail or call reports to the Epidemiology Office in each Public Health Region

### MAIL TO:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lowcountry</b></p> <p>4050 Bridge View Drive, Suite 600 N. Charleston, SC 29405 Fax: (843) 953-0051</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Midlands</b></p> <p>2000 Hampton Street Columbia, SC 29204 Fax: (803) 576-2993</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pee Dee</b></p> <p>145 E. Cheves Street Florence, SC 29506 Fax: (843) 915-6502</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Upstate</b></p> <p>200 University Ridge Greenville, SC 29602 Fax: (864) 282-4373</p>
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### CALL TO:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lowcountry</b></p> <p><b>Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester</b> Phone: (843) 953-0043 Nights/Weekends: (843) 441-1091</p> <p><b>Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, Jasper</b> Phone: (843) 549-1516 ext. 218 Nights/Weekends: (843) 441-1091</p> <p><b>Allendale, Bamberg, Calhoun, Orangeburg</b> Phone: (803) 268-5833 Nights/Weekends: (843) 441-1091</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Midlands</b></p> <p><b>Kershaw, Lexington, Newberry, Richland</b> Phone: (803) 576-2749 Nights/Weekends: (888) 801-1046</p> <p><b>Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster, York</b> Phone: (803) 286-9948 Nights/Weekends: (888) 801-1046</p> <p><b>Aiken, Barnwell, Edgefield, Saluda</b> Phone: (803) 642-1618 Nights/Weekends: (888) 801-1046</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pee Dee</b></p> <p><b>Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, , Marion, Marlboro</b> Phone: (843) 661-4830 Nights/Weekends: (843) 915-8845</p> <p><b>Clarendon, Lee, Sumter</b> Phone: (803) 773-5511 Nights/Weekends: (843) 915-8845</p> <p><b>Georgetown, Horry, Williamsburg</b> Phone: (843) 915-8800 Nights/Weekends: (843) 915-8845</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Upstate</b></p> <p><b>Anderson, Oconee</b> Phone: (864) 260-5581 Nights/Weekends: (866) 298-4442</p> <p><b>Abbeville, Greenwood, McCormick</b> Phone: (864) 260-5581 Nights/Weekends: (866) 298-4442</p> <p><b>Cherokee, Greenville, Laurens Pickens, Spartanburg, Union</b> Phone: (864) 372-3133 Nights/Weekends: (866) 298-4442</p>
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For information on reportable conditions, see  
<https://www.scdhec.gov/health-professionals/report-diseases-adverse-events/south-carolina-list-reportable-conditions>

**DHEC Bureau of Disease Control**  
**Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology**  
2100 Bull St • Columbia, SC 29201  
Phone: (803) 898-0861 • Fax: (803) 898-0897  
Nights / Weekends: (888) 847-0902

Categories of Health Alert messages:

<b>Health Alert</b>	Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
<b>Health Advisory</b>	Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
<b>Health Update</b>	Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.
<b>Info Service</b>	Provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.