

HEALTH ALERT NETWORK | HEALTH ADVISORY | February 16, 2024

Confirmed Hepatitis A Case in North Dakota

The North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (ND HHS) received a report of a case of hepatitis A in Grand Forks County, North Dakota. This individual is a food worker possibly exposed following out-of-state travel. Through investigation, ND HHS determined that individuals who ate at the Chick-fil-A at the University of North Dakota (UND) Memorial Union potentially were exposed to hepatitis A. ND HHS [released information to the public](#) about potential exposures and directed those exposed to get vaccinated against hepatitis A infection. Symptomatic individuals were instructed to seek healthcare for their illness. No additional cases of hepatitis A have been identified, however **providers should consider hepatitis A as a diagnosis in anyone with jaundice and clinically compatible symptoms when evaluating patients. Providers should contact ND HHS at 701.328.2378 to report suspected cases of hepatitis A. Providers should not wait for laboratory results to report.**

Hepatitis A is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. Symptoms of hepatitis A may include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark urine, pale stools, and jaundice. It could take up to seven weeks after an individual is exposed to the virus for symptoms to begin. Hepatitis A is highly transmissible, primarily person-to-person, through the fecal-oral route. Someone sick with hepatitis A is most likely to spread the virus during the two weeks before feeling sick and for eight days after jaundice onset, or if no jaundice, two weeks after disease onset.

Hepatitis A Testing:

Healthcare providers should consider hepatitis A diagnosis and testing in anyone with jaundice and clinically compatible symptoms. ND HHS recommends collecting a serum sample for Hepatitis A antibody (IgM) testing from all patients with suspected hepatitis A infection. The ND HHS Laboratory Services section has [hepatitis A IgM antibody](#) testing available. Acceptable specimens of 2 ml acute phase serum refrigerated will be accepted. Contact Laboratory Services with questions regarding hepatitis A IgM testing at 701.328.6272.

Providers and laboratories should save reactive serum samples for additional testing to assist ND HHS in the investigation of transmission.

Patient Management:

There is no treatment for hepatitis A aside from supportive treatment.

The incubation period for hepatitis A is usually 28 days but can range from 15 to 50 days. Symptomatic contacts to confirmed cases should be advised to exclude themselves from high risk activities until a lab test is done to confirm a diagnosis. There is no need to test asymptomatic contacts for hepatitis A.

Children can return to child care and school one week after the day their symptoms started, unless there are other circumstances in which they should be excluded. A food handler should be excluded from work until one of the following conditions is met: a) The food handler has been jaundiced for more than seven days; b) The food handler has been symptomatic with symptoms other than jaundice for more than fourteen days; c) the food handler provides to the person in charge written medical documentation from a health practitioner stating the food employee is free of a hepatitis A viral infection.

Immunization Recommendations for Exposed Persons:

The following individuals should receive post exposure prophylaxis within 14 days of exposure to hepatitis A:

- All household contacts of the case
- Sexual contacts of the case
- Individuals for whom the case prepared food
- Child care contacts of the case

Persons age 12 months and older:

Persons age 12 months and older exposed to hepatitis A within the past 14 days and who have not previously completed the 2-dose hepatitis vaccine series should receive a single dose of hepatitis A vaccine as soon as possible. A second dose should be administered six months after the first dose to complete the series.

Infants aged <12 months and persons for whom the vaccine is contraindicated:

Infants aged <12 months and persons for whom vaccine is contraindicated (persons who have had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of hepatitis A vaccine, or who have a severe allergy to any component of this vaccine) should receive immune globulin (0.1 mL/kg) instead of hepatitis A vaccine, as soon as possible and within 2 weeks of exposure.

Persons aged ≥12 months who are immunocompromised or have chronic liver disease:

Persons who are immunocompromised or have chronic liver disease and who have been exposed to hepatitis A within the past 14 days and have not previously completed the 2-

dose hepatitis A vaccination series should receive both immune globulin (0.1 mL/kg) and hepatitis A vaccine simultaneously in a different anatomic site (e.g., separate limbs) as soon as possible after exposure.

Hepatitis A Immunization:

Hepatitis A vaccine should be administered routinely to the following:

- All Children at ages 12-23 months
- Children and adolescents 2 through 18 years of age who were not vaccinated previously
- Any person 18 years of age and older who is not fully vaccinated and requests vaccination.
- Persons who are at an increased risk for infection:
 - Persons who have chronic liver disease
 - Persons who have HIV infection
 - Men who have sex with men
 - Persons experiencing homelessness
 - Persons who use injection and non-injection drugs
 - Persons who have occupational risk for infection
 - Persons traveling to or working in countries that have high or intermediate endemicity of hepatitis A
 - Household members and other close personal contacts of adopted children newly arriving from countries with high or intermediate hepatitis A
 - Persons with direct contact with persons who have hepatitis A

ND HHS supplies hepatitis A vaccine for all Vaccines for Children (VFC) eligible children (18 years and younger and either Medicaid eligible, American Indian, uninsured, or underinsured). Vaccines for Adult (VFA) providers can order hepatitis a vaccine for un/underinsured high-risk adults. Please refer to the [vaccine coverage table](#) for additional information regarding state-supplies hepatitis A vaccine.

Please contact the ND HHS Immunization Unit at 701.328.2378 or toll-free at 800.472.2180 with any questions or concerns regarding this issue.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- *Health Alert conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.*
- *Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.*
- *Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*
This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, and hospital public information officers.