



San Francisco Department of Public Health

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City and County of San Francisco
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San Francisco announces Hepatitis A vaccination campaign to reduce the risk of outbreak

Protecting homeless people with safe, effective vaccine

More than 2,500 free doses distributed to date

**Hep A vaccines will be offered at Project Homeless Connect on Oct 11
10am to 3pm, at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAN FRANCISCO (October 4, 2017) – In light of the Hepatitis A outbreaks elsewhere in California, San Francisco is taking a proactive approach to reduce the risk of a similar outbreak among homeless people and drug users here. The Health Department is moving quickly to vaccinate people in homeless communities for Hepatitis A, a safe and effective method that protects individual health and the health of the community.

“The at-risk populations for Hepatitis A infection are homeless and drug using communities,” said Barbara Garcia, Director of Health. “We are directly reaching out to these populations to provide vaccinations to ensure that we reduce the risks of a Hepatitis A outbreak in San Francisco.”

The Hepatitis A vaccine is safe and effective and the best strategy to reduce the chance of an outbreak here while protecting the at-risk population. The vaccine is free and being made widely available thanks to collaboration with health care providers, community based organizations, homeless shelters, navigation centers and employees and volunteers who work with the population at-risk.

Hepatitis A is an infectious virus that causes liver inflammation. It is spread person-to-person by close contact and contaminated food. The virus is ingested by mouth from contact with hands, objects, surfaces, food or drinks that are contaminated by the feces of an infected person. Unlike Hepatitis B or C, it is not a chronic illness and is not blood borne.

“No one needs to be at risk for Hepatitis A, because there is a safe and very effective vaccine,” Garcia said. That vaccine has been recommended as part of the regular

childhood series in the United States since 2005, and recommended for all children in California since 1999. Many adults need to play catch up to be protected. However, some already have been immunized, as the Hepatitis A vaccine already is recommended for men who have sex with men, for anyone with liver disease such as Hepatitis B or C, and for drug users. It is also recommended for anyone who plans to travel anywhere other than Western Europe, North America or Australia.

The current Hepatitis A outbreaks among homeless people in San Diego, Santa Cruz and Los Angeles have informed prevention efforts in San Francisco. The Health Department began moving aggressively in July to make Hepatitis A vaccination easy and accessible to homeless people, and has been stepping up the effort ever since.

To date the Health Department has distributed 2,500 doses of outbreak prevention Hepatitis A vaccine to clinics and community organizations that serve homeless people and drug users. Additional vaccines have been given at primary care clinics, and in homeless shelters and navigation centers. All of these vaccines are provided free of charge to recipients.

“The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) is working closely with the Department of Public Health to ensure the most vulnerable people get vaccinated,” said Jeff Kositsky, HSH Director. “We share the commitment to ensuring that people at highest risk for contracting Hepatitis A get access to the life-saving vaccine. DPH staff has vaccinated people at shelters, navigation centers and on the streets in encampments to ensure their health and also the broader community’s health.”

In October, the Health Department and community partners will be escalating efforts with a series of pop-up vaccination clinics and an increase in street outreach, along with a continuation of the activities already underway.

Hepatitis A vaccines will be offered at Project Homeless Connect on Oct 11, 10am to 3pm, at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium.

Hepatitis A infection is typically an acute illness associated with fever, malaise, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain and jaundice (a yellowing of the skin or eyes). Severe hepatitis A infection is rare but is more common in people with underlying liver disease, such as Hepatitis B or C.

Unlike Hepatitis B or C, which are slow moving and can cause no symptoms for years, Hepatitis A usually shows symptoms in 15 to 50 days after a person has been infected, and patients can get really sick.

People who lack reliable hand-washing facilities, clean toilets, and who eat food that they did not prepare themselves are more at risk, given the way the disease spreads. Hand sanitizer does not fight Hepatitis A virus – real soap and water is required.

Employees and volunteers who work in those circumstances may also be at risk, and we are encouraging them to get vaccinated as well. Many Health Department and Public Works staff are already vaccinated.

"We need to make sure that our workers who are on the front lines 24/7 keeping our city clean are kept safe and healthy. To that end, we continuously train our crews on sound infection-control practices and remind them of the importance of getting the Hepatitis A vaccine," said San Francisco Public Works Director Mohammed Nuru.

San Francisco has had very few Hepatitis A cases, and none in the homeless population at this time. We had five confirmed cases of Hepatitis A in 2015 and three confirmed cases in 2016. This year, San Francisco has had 13 cases – seven of those were among men who have sex with men -- but that strain is not connected to the outbreaks among homeless people. However, it is very important for men who have sex with men to be immunized. <http://www.sfcddcp.org/vaccinesgaybimen.html>

Where can people in San Francisco get HepA vaccines?

- Anyone with a health care provider, or a primary care clinic, should ask for the vaccine there.
- Vaccinations are being given at homeless shelters and navigation centers throughout the City. Outreach teams are visiting encampments.
- To find a HepA vaccine at a location near you, visit the [Vaccine Finder](#).
- People who are homeless can access vaccines at these sites:

Tom Waddell Urgent Care Clinic
50 Lech Walesa (Ivy) Street / near Polk
(415) 355-7400
Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu 8:00am – 6:00pm
Fri 8:00am – 5:00pm
Sat 8:30am – 5:00pm

Tom Waddell Urban Health Center
230 Golden Gate Avenue / near Leavenworth
(415) 355-7500
Mon & Fri 8:30am – 4:30pm

St. Anthony Medical Clinic
150 Golden Gate Ave., 2nd floor (cross Jones Street)
(415) 241-8320
Mon & Tue 8:00am - 12:00pm, 1:00pm - 4:30pm
Wed 8:00am - 12:00pm
Thu 8:00am - 12:00pm, 1:00pm - 4:30pm

San Francisco Free Clinic
4900 California St (at 11th Ave)
(415) 750-9894
Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu &
Fri 10:00am-4:30pm

Get more San Francisco information here: <http://www.sfcddcp.org/preventhepA.html>

The State Health Department is tracking Hepatitis A outbreaks in California homeless populations, providing weekly updates online.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/Hepatitis-A.aspx>