

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 10/16/2018**

TO: Grant County Healthcare Providers

**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT**

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## Increase in Acute Hepatitis B Cases In Spokane County

GRANT COUNTY, WA- Grant County Health Officer, Dr. Alexander Brzezny, issues the following alert to the healthcare community: there is an outbreak of at least **eight cases of acute hepatitis B virus (HBV) in Spokane County and surrounding areas since mid-June 2018.** The increase has been observed primarily in males who use injection drugs and their contacts. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) is conducting further testing to determine relationships between the cases. The age range of cases at diagnosis are 27 to 55. Seventy five percent have evidence of injection drug use history; the others report high risk sexual activity only.

### We are asking healthcare providers to:

1. Remain alert to the potential for recent HBV infection, particularly in people who use injection drugs and their sex and needle-sharing contacts. It's important to ask your patients at each visit about high risk behaviors, including injection drug use and unprotected sex.
  - A. Persons recently infected with hepatitis B can be asymptomatic. However, if symptoms occur, onset is usually insidious with loss of appetite, right upper quadrant abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, fatigue, and sometimes arthralgias or rash, with illness often progressing to jaundice. Liver enzyme levels may be markedly elevated. Fever may be absent or mild. Rarely, acute infections result in fulminant liver necrosis and death.
  - B. Acute and chronic hepatitis B infections are most commonly diagnosed by identifying specific antigens or antibodies in blood. For guidance, refer to the DOH guidelines: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-040-Guideline-HepatitisB.pdf>
2. Give HBV vaccine to susceptible individuals who are at risk for infection. **People recommended to receive vaccine include:**
  - A. People whose sex partners have hepatitis B
  - B. Sexually active persons who are not in a long-term monogamous relationship
  - C. Persons seeking evaluation or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease
  - D. Men who have sex with men
  - E. People who share needles, syringes or other drug-injection equipment
  - F. People who have household contact with someone infected with the hepatitis B virus
  - G. Health care and public safety workers at risk for exposure to blood or body fluids
  - H. Residents and staff of facilities for developmentally disabled persons
  - I. Persons in correctional facilities



- J. Victims of sexual assault or abuse
  - K. Travelers to regions with increased rates of hepatitis B
  - L. People with chronic liver disease, kidney disease, HIV infection or diabetes
3. Promote hepatitis B prevention strategies in at-risk patients, through vaccination, condom use, safe injection practices (including referral to Grant County Needle Exchange at 1075 W. Marina Drive, Moses Lake on Wednesdays from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm), not sharing personal hygiene products such as razors, and referral to substance use treatment and other harm reduction services.
  4. Report all cases of suspected acute HBV infection to the Grant County Health District ( 509-766-7960). Please provide as much risk history, clinical information, and demographic information as possible so that the scope of this outbreak can be better understood on a timely basis.

**Clinical Consultation**

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