

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 3/13/2023**

TO: Grant County Healthcare Providers

**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT**

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## Confirmed Hepatitis A Case in Grant County

The Grant County Health Officer, Dr. Alexander Brzezny, has issued the following alert to notify the Grant County healthcare community of a confirmed Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) case in Grant County. Grant County Health District (GCHD) is investigating a laboratory-confirmed HAV infection in an individual that recently traveled from abroad to reside in Grant County. All potential close contacts have been notified and were provided HAV vaccine recommendations and arrangements.

We ask that healthcare providers remain vigilant about Hepatitis A and strongly consider testing any patients with signs and symptoms of that disorder. **HAV is a notifiable condition (<https://doh.wa.gov/public-health-healthcare-providers/notifiable-conditions>).** Please notify Grant County Health District immediately of any individuals suspected for acute HAV infection. A positive HAV test result must be reported within 24 hours. Contact GCHD at 509-398-2083. Healthcare providers should continue to implement Washington State Department of Health guidance: <https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/420-039-Guideline-HepatitisA.pdf>.

**Hepatitis A Symptoms** – The average incubation period for HAV is 30 days (range: 15–50 days). Among older children and adults, infection is typically symptomatic. Symptoms usually occur abruptly and can include the following:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Diarrhea
- Clay-colored stool
- Joint pain
- Jaundice

**Testing and Diagnosis** - A diagnosis is confirmed by detecting anti-HAV IgM in serum of a person with a compatible acute illness and with either jaundice or an elevated aminotransferase level. False positive IgM results are common, particularly in older persons without acute illness, therefore **only those with compatible symptoms and/or documented exposure to HAV should be tested.**

**Hepatitis A Prevention** – Vaccination with the full, two-dose series of hepatitis A vaccine is the best way to prevent infection. Immunoglobulin can provide short-term protection against hepatitis A, both pre- and postexposure. Immunoglobulin must be administered within 2 weeks after exposure for maximum protection.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has licensed two single-antigen hepatitis A vaccines and one combination vaccine for use in the United States. All are inactivated vaccines.



#### Single-antigen hepatitis A vaccines

- HAVRIX® (manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline)
- VAQTA® (manufactured by Merck & Co., Inc)

#### Combination vaccine

- TWINRIX® (manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline): Combined hepatitis A (in a lower dosage than single-antigen formulations) and hepatitis B vaccine.

In addition to the vaccine, good hand hygiene — including thoroughly washing hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food can help prevent infection. Anyone exposed to or suspected of having HAV infection should not handle or prepare food for others.

**Transmission** - Hepatitis A is usually spread when a person unknowingly ingests the virus from food or drinks contaminated by undetected amounts of stool from an infected person. Hep A can also spread from close personal contact from an infected person via sex or caring for someone who is ill.

**Patient Recommendations** - HAV is a vaccine-preventable virus. GCHD encourages the Grant County healthcare community to recommend the vaccine to all eligible and **high-risk** patients. Routine vaccination with hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for the following groups:

- All children between their first and second birthdays (12 through 23 months of age)
- All children 2-18 years who were not previously vaccinated (catch-up vaccination)
- All persons ≥ 1 year infected with HIV
- Persons with chronic liver disease
- Pregnant women who are identified to be at risk for HAV infection during pregnancy
- Members of households planning to adopt or to care for a newly arriving adopted child from a country where hepatitis A is common (see: [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel))
- Men who have sex with men
- Persons who use illegal drugs
- Persons experiencing unstable housing or homelessness
- Anyone 6 months of age and older traveling or working in areas with intermediate or high prevalence of HAV
- Settings providing services to adults in which a high proportion having risk factors for HAV infection

#### References -

Washington State Department of Health –

<https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/420-039-Guideline-HepatitisA.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/havfaq.htm#B3>

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