



SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

GAIL NEWEL, MD, MPH
HEALTH OFFICER

JAMES A. RYDINGSWORD
AGENCY DIRECTOR

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

CDPH Taking Action to Increase Hepatitis A Vaccine Supplies HEALTH ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
13 October 2017

CONTACT: Sam Perez, Public Information Officer
Tel: 831-637-5367

SACRAMENTO – California Governor Edmund G Brown Jr. today declared a state of emergency to help control the state’s hepatitis A outbreak and increase the supply of adult hepatitis A vaccines to meet current needs.

“Vaccinating people at risk of exposure is the most effective tool we have to prevent the spread of hepatitis A infection during an outbreak,” said California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith.

To help combat the outbreak, CDPH has already distributed nearly 80,000 doses of the vaccine that were obtained through the federal vaccine program, but those supplies must be increased to continue to address the outbreak. Today’s declaration allows CDPH to immediately purchase additional vaccines directly from manufacturers and coordinate distribution to people at greatest risk in affected areas.

The adult hepatitis A vaccine is different than the one given to children, of which there is ample supply.

The risk of hepatitis A infection is associated with poor sanitation and hygiene and is transmitted through ingestion of contaminated food and drink or through direct contact with an infectious person. The current outbreak has largely impacted people experiencing homelessness and some illicit drug users. The virus can live for months in a contaminated environment, particularly in the absence of good sanitation.

To control this outbreak and prevent further spread, CDPH recommends the vaccination of people in affected areas who are homeless or using illicit drugs. CDPH also recommends vaccination of people who have frequent, close contact with at-risk populations in affected areas. CDPH is working with impacted counties to monitor the outbreak and implement vaccination efforts and is also providing guidance on improving sanitation, including access to hand washing facilities and toilets, to lessen the spread of the virus.

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
439 Fourth Street
Hollister, CA 95023
831-637-5367

MEDICAL THERAPY UNIT
761 South Street
Hollister, CA 95023
831-637-1989

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
351 Tres Pinos Road, Suite C-1
Hollister, CA 95023
831-636-4035

HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS
439 Fourth Street
Hollister, CA 95023
831-637-5367

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“Local public health officials are working hard to offer vaccines to people who are at the most at risk of infection, including homeless Californians,” said Dr. Smith. “Today’s order will help ensure communities can continue to deliver the vaccines where they are needed most.”

“The increase in supply of adult hepatitis A vaccines to our jurisdiction will allow for us to better meet the needs of our at-risk community members. Although there are no confirmed cases of hepatitis A in San Benito County, we are proactive in conducting prevention and control measures including; providing hepatitis A vaccine to at-risk individuals, including persons experiencing homelessness and/or using illicit drugs,” said Dr. Newel, San Benito County Public Health Officer.

Hepatitis A infection typically causes fever, a general ill feeling with lack of appetite and nausea, and, later in the course of the infection, yellowness of the skin and eyes. Severe hepatitis A infection is rare but does occur in people with underlying liver disease and can cause the liver to fail, potentially leading to death.

Hepatitis A vaccine is available at many doctors’ offices and clinics and at some retail pharmacies. For persons without health insurance or Medi-Cal, vaccine is available at San Benito County Public Health Services. For additional information please call (831) 637-5367 or go to our website at <http://hhsa.cosb.us/divisions/public-health> or visit CDPH’s website at www.cdph.ca.gov.

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