



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CDPH Taking Action to Increase Hepatitis A Vaccine Supplies

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 handwashing facilities and toilets, to lessen the spread of the virus.

“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.”

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.

For more information about hepatitis A, review our [frequently asked questions](#) and [visit CDPH’s website](#).

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