



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**This is an official
MS Health Alert Network (HAN) Advisory**

MESSAGE ID: MSHAN-20190802-00149-ADV (Health Advisory)
RECIPIENTS: All Physicians, Hospitals, ERs, ICPs, NPs, and
Healthcare Providers - Statewide
DATE: Friday, August 02, 2019
SUBJECT: 2019 Hepatitis A Outbreak in Mississippi

Key Points

- Mississippi is experiencing a hepatitis A outbreak, with ongoing sustained increases in cases dating back to April 2019.
- Individuals at high-risk for hepatitis A associated with this outbreak include: those who use recreational drugs (IV and non-IV drugs), those who are currently or recently incarcerated, men who have sex with men (MSM), and those with unstable housing or who are homeless.
- Multiple states nationwide have experienced similar hepatitis A outbreaks since 2017 (see <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/2017March-HepatitisA.htm> for US update).
- With the current hepatitis A outbreak in Mississippi, the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) is asking providers to:
 - Consider hepatitis A vaccine for any individual in the high-risk groups for this outbreak (including drug users, those recently or currently incarcerated, those experiencing homelessness, and men who have sex with men)
 - Consider hepatitis A infection in persons with a clinically compatible illness and report to MSDH BY PHONE within 24 hours of first knowledge or suspicion (601-576-7725 during normal business hours or 601-576-7400 after hours, weekends and holidays).

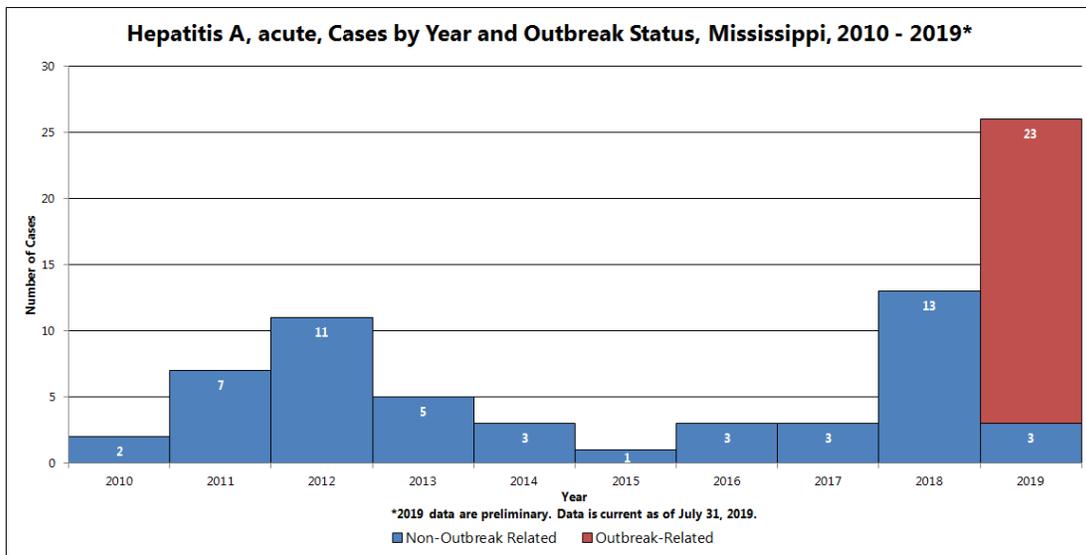
Mississippi is currently experiencing an outbreak of hepatitis A with marked sustained increases in cases since April 2019, indicating a concern for ongoing person to person transmission. In June 2019 the Mississippi State Department of Health issued a Health Alert indicating a marked rise in the number of reported cases, especially among high risk groups. Since that time there have been continued increases in the number of reported cases. To date, there have been 23 outbreak related cases reported since April, compared to 26 total cases for all of 2019 and 13 cases for all of 2018 (Figure). Similar to other hepatitis A outbreaks in the US, in Mississippi most of the outbreak cases have occurred among drug users, accounting for 61% of the cases, and among persons with recent or current incarceration. Other affected groups include men who have sex with men and those with unstable housing or who are homeless. More cases of acute hepatitis A are expected, with the possibility of cases occurring in food workers or others without known risk factors.



Hepatitis A virus infection is a vaccine preventable disease characterized by an abrupt onset of fever, anorexia, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain, followed several days later by the onset of jaundice. Transmission is typically person to person through fecal-oral spread, and the incubation period is typically 28-30 days (although illness can occur up to 50 days post-exposure). Diagnosis is confirmed by a positive IgM serology in a person with symptoms consistent with acute hepatitis A infection.

Vaccination, especially for those at higher risk for infection in this outbreak, is the key reducing the number of susceptible individuals and interrupting transmission. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided outbreak-specific guidance for hepatitis A vaccination available at <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/InterimOutbreakGuidance-HAV-VaccineAdmin.htm>. **A single dose of hepatitis A vaccine is considered to provide up to 95% protection for up to 11 years and has been shown to be effective at controlling transmission during hepatitis A outbreaks.**

Figure



In addition to vaccination efforts, timely identification and reporting of acute infections is vital. Hepatitis A is a Class 1A reportable condition in Mississippi requiring notification BY PHONE to MSDH within 24 hours of first knowledge or suspicion. Timely reporting allows MSDH to quickly and effectively identify contacts and provide post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent further transmission.

Mississippi providers are asked to assist MSDH in the mitigation of this hepatitis A outbreak in the following ways:

- Consider hepatitis A as a diagnosis in anyone with jaundice and a clinically compatible presentation, especially in those individuals at highest risk;



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- Report cases of hepatitis A to MSDH within 24 hours of first knowledge or suspicion by telephone to 601-576-7725 during routine business hours (or 601-576-7400 after hours, weekends, and holidays);
- Please consider collecting and storing an extra red top tube of blood to submit to the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory for confirmation and possible genotype testing at CDC if the initial hepatitis A IgM is positive;
- Consider vaccinating persons at higher risk for hepatitis A infection, including:
 - People who use recreational drugs;
 - People experiencing homelessness or unstable housing;
 - Men who have sex with men;
 - People who are or have recently be incarcerated;
- Continue to offer hepatitis A vaccine to:
 - Patients traveling to countries where hepatitis A is endemic;
 - Children;
 - Patients with chronic liver disease;
 - People who have an occupational risk for infection;
 - All other groups as recommended by current ACIP guidelines.
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/hepa.html>

Please contact the MSDH Office of Epidemiology at 601-576-7725 if you have any questions or concerns.

Regards,

Kathryn Taylor, MD
Deputy State Epidemiologist



Alerting Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency: Mississippi State Department of Health
Alerting Program: MS Health Alert Network (MS HAN)
Message Identifier: MSHAN-201900802-00149-ADV
Program (HAN) Type: Health Advisory
Status (Type): Actual ()
Message Type: Alert
Reference: MSHAN-00149
Severity: Unknown
Acknowledgement: No
Sensitive: Not Sensitive
Message Expiration: Undetermined
Urgency: Undetermined
Delivery Time: 600 minutes

Definition of Alerting Vocabulary and Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency: A unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.

Alerting Program: The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.

Message Identifier: A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation (MSHAN-yyymmdd-hhmm-TTT (**ALT=Health Alert**, **ADV=Health Advisory**, **UPD=Health Update**, **MSG/INFO=Message/Info Service**)).

Program (HAN) Type: Categories of Health Alert Messages.

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Health Info Service: Provides Message / Notification of general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.

Status (Type):

- Actual: Communication or alert refers to a live event
- Exercise: Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
- Test: Communication or alert is related to a technical, system test and should be disregarded



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Message Type:

Alert: Indicates an original Alert
Update: Indicates prior alert has been Updated and/or superseded
Cancel: Indicates prior alert has been cancelled
Error: Indicates prior alert has been retracted

Reference: For a communication or alert with a Message Type of “Update” or “Cancel”, this attribute contains the unique Message Identifier of the original communication or alert being updated or cancelled. “n/a” = Not Applicable.

Severity:

Extreme: Extraordinary threat to life or property
Severe: Significant threat to life or property
Moderate: Possible threat to life or property
Minor: Minimal threat to life or property
Unknown: Unknown threat to life or property

Acknowledgement: Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the timeframe in which a response is required (Yes or No).

Sensitive:

Sensitive: Indicates the alert contains sensitive content
Not Sensitive: Indicates non-sensitive content

Message Expiration: Undetermined.

Urgency: Undetermined. Responsive action should be taken immediately.

Delivery Time: Indicates the timeframe for delivery of the alert (15, 60, 1440, 4320 minutes (.25, 1, 24, 72 hours)).