



Public Health  
Division

# County of Santa Cruz

## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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TO: Fire and Emergency Medical Services Agency  
Homeless Providers  
Law Enforcement Agencies  
Local Businesses  
Substance Use Treatment Providers

FROM: Arnold S. Leff, MD, REHS  
County Public Health Officer

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE ABOVE AVERAGE INCIDENCE OF ACUTE HEPATITIS A VIRUS INFECTION IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Santa Cruz County, Health Services Agency, Public Health Division is currently investigating an increased number of Hepatitis A cases. The County usually has 1-2 confirmed cases per year. In the last 8 weeks the county has received 9 confirmed cases.

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection that is spread when a person ingests food or water that has been contaminated by the feces of an infected person (i.e., touching objects or eating food that someone with Hepatitis A handled.) Hepatitis A is usually transmitted when an infected person has not washed her/his hands after using the bathroom or before preparing and eating food. The majority of persons impacted have been homeless and/or persons using illicit drugs.

Hepatitis A vaccination is the best way to prevent the disease. The Public Health Division is working to increase access to the vaccine for homeless persons and illicit drug users through vaccination clinics and small outreach teams. Most employees have a low risk of contracting Hepatitis A if they comply with hand-washing and other hygiene requirements associated with their jobs.

What can local agencies and businesses do to prevent the spread of Hepatitis A?

- Remind employees of the importance of hand-washing with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, and before preparing, serving, or eating food.
- Maintain routine and consistent cleaning of bathrooms using a chlorine-based disinfectant (bleach) with a ratio of  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of bleach to one gallon of water. Include bathrooms that are for employees only and those that are open to the public.

- For employees in physical contact with others, especially those at risk for Hepatitis A, wear disposable gloves and wash hands after each encounter.
- Coordinate with your occupational health provider to determine if Hepatitis A vaccine should be offered to employees.

Everyone can play a role in addressing this significant public health threat. Thank you for your help in containing the spread of Hepatitis A. Attached are several documents to share with employees, the at risk population, or others. These include a Hepatitis A Flyer, Vaccine Location Postcards, and a Frequently Asked Questions document. If you'd prefer hard copies of any of these documents please email [hsadoc.pio@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:hsadoc.pio@santacruzcounty.us) or call (831) 566-4370.

For additional information, please visit [www.SantaCruzHealth.org/HepA](http://www.SantaCruzHealth.org/HepA). If you have any questions, please contact the Communicable Disease unit at (831) 454-4114.



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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**Santa Cruz County**