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A Rise in Hepatitis A throughout Cayuga County**

The Cayuga County Health Department is reporting a rise in Hepatitis A cases throughout the county and the state.

Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is a highly contagious liver disease that results from infection with HAV. The symptoms can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months.

Hepatitis A spreads person to person when:

- an infected person does not wash his or her hands properly with soap and water after going to the bathroom and then touches objects or food;
- a caregiver does not properly wash his or her hands with soap and water after changing diapers or cleaning up the stool of an infected person; or
- someone engages in certain sexual activities, such as, but not limited to, oral-anal contact with an infected person

Not everyone infected with hepatitis A has symptoms. These symptoms may include: fever, fatigue, nausea (a feeling of sickness in the stomach), vomiting, stomach pain, clay-colored stool, dark urine or yellowing of skin and eyes. Symptoms can last for as long as 6 months. Most people who get hepatitis A recover completely and do not have lasting liver damage. If you have any symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

Vaccination is strongly recommended for at-risk individuals including:

- Users of recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- People experiencing unstable housing or homelessness
- Men who have sex with men
- People who are currently or were recently incarcerated
- People with chronic or long-term liver disease, including Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C
- Travelers to countries where hepatitis A is common
- People with clotting-factor disorders
- Family and caregivers of adoptees from countries where hepatitis A is common

Good hygiene including handwashing after using the bathroom, changing diapers and before preparing or eating food is important in preventing the spread of HAV. However, the best way to

prevent the spread of HAV is through vaccination with the hepatitis A vaccine. Children 18 months and younger are recommended to have two doses of hepatitis A vaccine as part of routine vaccinations.

The Cayuga County Health Department has hepatitis A vaccine available, and strongly encourages at risk populations to be vaccinated. Appointments can be made by calling 315-253-1560. You can also check with your physician's office to see if they have the vaccine available.

Anyone with questions or concerns can call the Cayuga County Health Department at 315-253-1560.

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