

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

Celeste Philip, MD, MPH
Surgeon General and Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

December 10, 2018

Dear Pinellas County Health Care Providers:

This letter is a follow-up to the public health advisory from the Florida Department of Health (Department) regarding the statewide increase in hepatitis A cases. Since January 2018, the Department continues to see an unprecedented increase in hepatitis A cases in the Tampa Bay region. In Pinellas County, over 90 cases of hepatitis A have been reported, with an average of two or more cases per week. As of December 10, Pinellas County has reported the highest number of cases statewide. Common risk factors reported among cases include injection and non-injection drug use, homelessness and men having sex with men; however, anyone who comes in contact with a case of hepatitis A can be exposed to the virus.

The Department urges health care providers in Pinellas County to partake in this public health response by doing the following during their routine health care visits:

- educating their patients about hepatitis A
- discussing the significant increase in hepatitis A cases in the region
- strongly encouraging getting vaccinated against hepatitis A and utilizing proper hand hygiene

It is critical for health care providers to review patient immunization history and strongly recommend and administer hepatitis A vaccines to anyone who does not have documented evidence of immunity or is unsure of their vaccination status.

It is vital that if a patient is asymptomatic, but has risk factors or is identified as a close contact to a case of hepatitis A and has no evidence of immunity, they should receive a dose of the hepatitis A vaccine within two weeks of their last exposure to prevent infection. If a patient reports risk factors, has no evidence of immunity and is exhibiting symptoms of acute viral hepatitis, an acute hepatitis panel and liver function tests should be ordered.

Per Florida Administrative Code 64D-3, hepatitis A is immediately reportable to DOH 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to ensure a prompt public health response to prevent the spread of HAV. To report a case of hepatitis A, contact the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County at 727-824-6932.

Thank you for your assistance in preventing the spread of hepatitis A in Pinellas County.

Regards,

Ulyee Choe, D.O.
County Health Department Director