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TIME RUNNING OUT FOR HAMBURGER MARY'S PATRONS TO GET FREE HEP A VACCINE



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Tampa, Fla. – This Friday, November 2, the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (DOH-Hillsborough) will discontinue offering the free hepatitis A vaccine to those who ate or drank between October 4 – 20, at the Hamburger Mary's Ybor City.

The vaccine was offered for free by DOH-Hillsborough, to prevent those who may have been exposed to hepatitis A from getting sick. However, the vaccine must be administered within two weeks of exposure. That time is expiring soon and expired for some people already.

The hepatitis A vaccine is available at the DOH-Hillsborough Sulphur Springs location, which is at 8605 Mitchell Ave, Tampa, FL 33604. The clinic is open weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Those who are not affected by the Hamburger Mary's incident must pay \$59 for the hepatitis A vaccine, unless they are high-risk and qualify for a free vaccine.

As of Tuesday, 574 people received the hepatitis A vaccine following the announcement last Thursday. Additionally, the 813-307-8004 hotline received nearly 400 calls.

There have been no Hepatitis A cases linked to the Hamburger Mary's incident.

DOH-Hillsborough continues to encourage all healthcare providers, including hospital emergency departments to stay on high alert and immediately report cases to the Florida Department of Health.

Vaccination is the best way to prevent hepatitis A. People who should be vaccinated for hepatitis A include:

- All children at age 1 year
- People who are experiencing homelessness
- Users of recreational drugs, whether injected or not
- Men who have sexual encounters with other men
- People with direct contact with others who have hepatitis A
- Travelers to countries where hepatitis A is common
- People with chronic or long-term liver disease, including hepatitis B or hepatitis C
- People with clotting-factor disorders
- Family and caregivers of adoptees from countries where hepatitis A is common

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious disease that attacks the liver. People infected with hepatitis A are most contagious from two weeks before onset of symptoms to one week afterwards. Not everyone who is infected will have all the symptoms. Symptoms usually start within 28 days of exposure to the virus with a range of 15-50 days. Symptoms can include:

- Jaundice (yellowing skin and whites of eyes)
- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue/tired
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Dark-colored urine
- Pale or clay colored stool

How is hepatitis A treated or hepatitis A infection prevented?

- **Hepatitis A vaccine is the best method of preventing infection.**
- No medicines can cure the disease once symptoms appear. People with hepatitis A symptoms should seek medical care immediately.
- Most people get better over time but may need to be hospitalized.
- Previous infection with hepatitis A provides immunity for the rest of a person's life.
- People that are exposed to hepatitis A may be given vaccine or immune globulin within 14 days of exposure to prevent infection.

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