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DOH-HILLSBOROUGH IDENTIFIES CASE OF HEPATITIS A IN FOOD SERVICE WORKER; ENCOURAGES VACCINATION



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Tampa, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (DOH-Hillsborough) has identified a positive case of hepatitis A in a food service worker at Sandpiper Grille in Sun City Center. Hepatitis A vaccination is recommended for anyone who ate or drank between March 20 – 24 at the restaurant, which is located at 1702 S Pebble Beach Blvd., as they may have been exposed to hepatitis A. Those who have previously received the hepatitis A vaccine do not need to take additional action.

DOH-Hillsborough is offering the vaccine weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Sulphur Springs Health Complex, located at 8605 Mitchell Ave, Tampa, FL 33604, for free to those who may have been exposed. On Saturday, a special vaccination clinic will also be set up at the Joyce Ely Health Center (WIC Location), 205 14th Avenue, S.E., Ruskin, FL 33570, between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.

A hotline has been set up for people who may have questions. The number to call is (813) 307-8004.

Additional Details

On March 30, 2019, DOH-Hillsborough received lab confirmation that a person tested positive for hepatitis A and immediately began conducting an epidemiological investigation.

During the investigation it was confirmed that the worker handled food as a normal part of their work duties.

During the investigation food handling practices that could have potentially exposed patrons to hepatitis A were found.

Hepatitis A usually spreads when a person unknowingly ingests the virus from objects, food, or drinks contaminated by small, undetected amounts of stool from an infected person. Hepatitis A can also spread from close personal contact with an infected person such as through sex or caring for someone who is ill. Contamination of food (this can include frozen and undercooked food) by hepatitis A virus can happen at any point: growing, harvesting, processing, handling, and even after cooking.

Hepatitis A Facts

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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