

For more information on Hepatitis A or to report individuals with vomiting, diarrhea or fever associated with food consumption, contact:

Email: epidemiology.fhd@sdcounty.ca.gov

Phone: (858) 505-6814

Website: www.sdcdeh.org



HEPATITIS A VACCINATIONS FOR FOOD HANDLERS

Hepatitis A is a liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus. Highly contagious, the Hepatitis A virus is usually transmitted by the fecal-oral route, either through person-to-person contact or consumption of contaminated food or water. Contamination can occur when infected persons do not wash their hands properly after going to the bathroom and then touch other objects or food items. Surfaces that are frequently touched should be cleaned and sanitized often.

On August 21, 2017, the County Public Health Officer recommended that all food handlers in the region be vaccinated against the Hepatitis A virus. Food handlers can become infected with Hepatitis A through causes unrelated to their food facility work and can be handling food, and potentially spreading the virus before the infection is recognized.

No common sources of food, beverage or drugs have been identified that have contributed to this outbreak, although the investigation continues. **The best way to prevent food service from contributing to the Hepatitis A outbreak in San Diego County is for all food handlers to get vaccinated and practice proper handwashing.**

Where can I get vaccinated?

1. Ask your employer if they have an **Occupational Health Program** that you can visit to obtain a vaccination.
2. If you have health insurance, you can visit your **Medical Provider**.
3. **Local Pharmacies** may also offer vaccinations. Call before you visit.
4. If you do not have health insurance or are underinsured, you can visit a [County Public Health Immunization Clinic](#). You may also visit a [local Community Health Center](#). For a list of locations, call 2-1-1 or visit sdiz.org.
5. The County of San Diego is hosting **Vaccination Events** in certain areas. Please call **2-1-1** to find out where these vaccination events are being held.

Is the Hepatitis A vaccine safe?

Yes, the vaccine is safe and highly effective in preventing the Hepatitis A virus infection. You will be protected approximately 2 to 4 weeks after the first injection and longer-term defense is gained with the second injection. If you do not remember whether or not you have been vaccinated, repeating the vaccination is not harmful.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), before the Hepatitis A vaccine became available in 1995, more than 25,000 people developed Hepatitis A each year in the U.S. In 2017, there were about 2,500 cases reported. In 1999, routine vaccination was recommended by the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for children in high-incidence states, including California. In 2006, routine vaccination was recommended in all states.

Is there a fee to get vaccinated?

Always check with your occupational or personal health provider first when seeking a vaccination. Most providers have a mechanism for their patients to obtain vaccinations, which often includes getting a vaccination from a local pharmacy. Medi-Cal covers this vaccine without prior authorization. Individuals who are uninsured, whose insurance does not cover routine vaccinations, or whose occupational groups have been recommended for vaccination can go to a County Public Health Immunization Clinic to obtain the vaccine at no cost.

For more Information

For additional information, please go to the County of San Diego's Hepatitis A website:

http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs/community_epidemiology/dc/Hepatitis_A.html

Or call **2-1-1**

Preventing the Spread of Illness

- ✓ All food employees must practice diligent handwashing and good personal hygiene (see below for handwashing procedures).
- ✓ Use utensils or gloves to eliminate bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food.
- ✓ Thoroughly and continuously disinfect the facility and food areas using the guidelines at the reverse of this document.

Handwashing

- ✓ Food employees shall thoroughly wash their hands and arms with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds; thoroughly rinse with clean running water and properly dry their hands and arms.
- ✓ Ensure handwashing signs are posted in the appropriate locations.

Employees shall wash their hands in all of the following instances:

- Immediately before engaging in food preparations, including working with non-prepackaged food, clean equipment and utensils, and unwrapped single-use food containers and utensils.
- After touching bare human body parts other than clean hands and clean, exposed portions of arms.
- After using the toilet room.
- After caring for, or handling any animal allowed in a food facility.
- After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, using tobacco, eating or drinking.
- After handling soiled equipment or utensils.
- Before putting on disposable gloves to start working with food.
- During food preparation, as often as necessary to remove dirt and contamination; and when changing tasks to prevent cross-contamination.
- When switching between working with raw food and working with ready-to-eat food.
- Before dispensing or serving food, or handling clean tableware and serving utensils in the food service area.
- After engaging in other activities that contaminate hands.

Employee Health Guidelines

All food employees must be knowledgeable of the relationship between personal health, hygiene and food safety. Information on this topic can be found in the California Retail Food Code, Chapter 3 Article 3 – Employee Health.

The Employees are Responsible for Notifying the Person in Charge

- Notify the Person in Charge if you have been diagnosed with a Hepatitis A infection. Be advised that employees are also required to report the following: Salmonella, Shigella, Enterohemorrhagic or shiga toxin-producing E. coli, Norovirus, and Entamoeba histolytica.
- Remember, you should not work with food or utensils if you are sick with acute gastrointestinal illnesses. **Acute gastrointestinal illness is diarrhea, either alone or with vomiting, fever or abdominal cramps.**

The Person in Charge is Responsible for Meeting the Following Requirements

- **REPORT** to the County of San Diego - Department of Environmental Health (DEH) when a food employee is diagnosed with Hepatitis A. **Call (858) 505-6814**. Remember that the following illnesses must also be reported: Salmonella, Shigella, Enterohemorrhagic or shiga toxin-producing E. coli, Norovirus, and Entamoeba histolytica.
- **REPORT** to the DEH if **two or more people** are sick with acute gastrointestinal illness; **call (858) 505-6814**. **Acute gastrointestinal illness is diarrhea, either alone or with vomiting, fever or abdominal cramps.**
- **EXCLUDE** a food employee from the food facility if diagnosed with Salmonella, Hepatitis A, Norovirus, Shigella, Enterohemorrhagic or shiga toxin producing E. coli, or Entamoeba histolytica. Only the County of San Diego DEH or the Health and Human Services Agency can clear an excluded employee to return to work.
- **RESTRICT** a food employee from working with exposed food, clean equipment, clean linens, clean utensils and unwrapped single-service articles if food employee is suffering from symptoms of acute gastrointestinal illness or experiencing persistent coughing, sneezing or nasal discharges. Restrictions can be removed by the Person in Charge when the food employee states they no longer have symptoms of illness.