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HEALTH DEPARTMENT IN ST. LUCIE COUNTY ENCOURAGES VACCINATION TO STOP THE SPREAD OF HEPATITIS A



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St. Lucie County, FL – The Health Department in St. Lucie County is urging good handwashing and vaccination to stop the spread of Hepatitis A in the community. Several Florida counties are experiencing increases in Hepatitis A among drug users, homeless persons, men who have sex with men, and other persons who have contact with infected persons. Since January 2018 there have been more than 1,500 confirmed cases of Hepatitis A statewide. The Florida Department of Health considers a community "high risk" with five or more cases of active transmission within the last 50 days within a high- risk group. To date, the Health Department has confirmed seven cases of Hepatitis A in St. Lucie County.

Vaccination is the best way to prevent Hepatitis A. The Hepatitis A vaccine is available at many health care provider's offices, pharmacies, and the County Health Departments. The Florida Department of Health in St Lucie County (DOH-St. Lucie) is offering the Hepatitis A vaccine free of charge for uninsured or underinsured adults (ages 19 and older) by calling: 772-462-3800 for an appointment Monday – Friday, 8:30am – 4:30 pm at 5150 NW Milner Drive Port St Lucie. DOH-St. Lucie is also partnering and hosting several outreach events. For more information on specific dates and locations, please call 772-462-3883.

The Department of Health continues to work collectively within our community and in doing so:

- We have distributed information to health care providers about the hepatitis A outbreak and about the importance of vaccinating patients at high risk.
- We are working closely with community stakeholders to facilitate, educate and vaccinate persons at high risk for hepatitis A, who don't have a medical home.
- We are working in concert with the St. Lucie County jail's, Wexford Health Services offering Hepatitis A vaccinations to inmates on a voluntary basis. All inmates entering the jail are offered screening for contagious diseases. Each inmate is provided education on different communicable diseases such as blood borne pathogens, Hepatitis A, STDs and other ailments. As part of the history and physical exam that occurs within the first 10 days of incarceration, they are offered the Hepatitis A vaccination along with other voluntary testing or vaccinations contractually agreed upon with the health department. The services are offered, but the inmate has a right to refuse medical care.

General Information:

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable liver disease. Hepatitis A is transmitted from person to person by ingesting 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. Most people who get

hepatitis A feel sick for several weeks, but they usually recover completely and do not have lasting liver damage. In rare cases, hepatitis A can cause liver failure and death; this is more common in people older than 50 and in people with other liver diseases. Anyone experiencing symptoms of Hepatitis A should contact their healthcare provider for evaluation and testing.

Additional Resources: The Florida Department of Health has launched an information line, email box and a website to address general questions about Hepatitis A.

Hepatitis A, Information Line:

1-844-CALL-DOH (1-844-225-5364) available Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Website: www.Floridahealth.gov/hepa

Email questions: HepA@flhealth.gov

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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