



# Six new cases of Hepatitis A within past week

December 13 2018 11:36 AM

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is reporting six new cases of hepatitis A within the past week among individuals at high risk for infection. On average there are 70 cases of hepatitis A reported in Illinois each year. To date, 75 cases of hepatitis A have been confirmed statewide in 2018. Three of the most recent cases were reported in east-central Illinois, one in central Illinois, and two in suburban Cook County.

“While we are only slightly above our annual average for the number of hepatitis A cases, the accelerated rate of new cases in Illinois, not only in the past week, but the past month, is concerning,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “We encourage those at highest risk for infection, including men who have sex with men, homeless individuals, and those who use drugs, to get vaccinated against hepatitis A.”

Among the 75 cases this year, IDPH has identified 17 cases to be part of an outbreak. Those 17 individuals either fall into one or more of the groups at high risk for infection, have test results showing they match one of the U.S. outbreak strains, or are connected to a person who meets one of the above categories.

States across the country, including states bordering Illinois, are seeing large hepatitis A outbreaks.

- Indiana – 723 cases since September 2017
- Kentucky – 3,021 cases since August 2017
- Missouri – 234 cases since September 2017

In an effort to prevent additional hepatitis A cases in Illinois, IDPH is working with 38 local health departments around the state covering 41 counties to make hepatitis A vaccine more readily available. In early September 2018, IDPH requested a large number of hepatitis A vaccines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC). That vaccine is being delivered to local health departments to be available for free or at a reduced cost. Men who have sex with men, people who use drugs, and people who do not have a home should check with their health department about a free or reduced cost hepatitis A vaccine.

Hepatitis A is an infection that can damage the liver, and is passed easily from one person to another through food, water, drug use, and sex. Hepatitis A infection is a vaccine-preventable illness. Symptoms include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain, and jaundice. For more information about [hepatitis A](#), go to the [IDPH website](#) or to <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HA/V/index.htm>.