

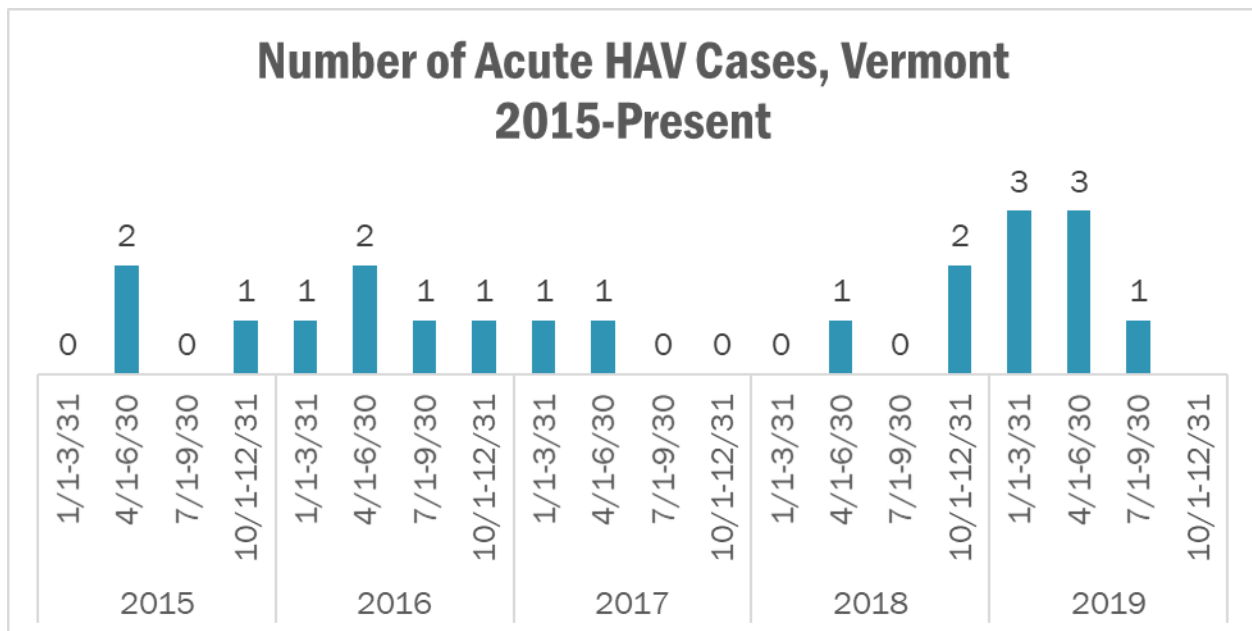
TO: Health care professionals and facilities
FROM: Patsy Kelso, PhD, State Epidemiologist

Hepatitis A – Vaccinate for Outbreak Prevention

Background and Epidemiology

Since 2016, more than 20 states, including New Hampshire and Massachusetts, have reported hepatitis A outbreaks. Over 22,000 cases have been reported, with a hospitalization rate near 60%. Recent outbreaks primarily affect adults and cause severe disease. Coinfection with hepatitis B and C, poor sanitary conditions, crowded living conditions, and certain high-risk sexual practices contribute to these outbreaks.

In Vermont, seven hepatitis A virus (HAV) infections have been reported to date in 2019, compared with the five-year mean of three cases annually.



The following groups are at highest risk for acquiring HAV infection or developing serious complications from HAV infection in these outbreaks, and should be offered the hepatitis A vaccine to prevent an outbreak in Vermont:

- People who use drugs (injection or non-injection)
- People experiencing unstable housing or homelessness
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- People who are currently or were recently incarcerated
- People with chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C

New and Updated Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) Recommendations

- All children and adolescents age 2 through 18 years who have not previously received hepatitis A vaccine be vaccinated routinely at any age (i.e. children and adolescents are recommended for catch-up vaccination).
- As of February 15, 2019, ACIP recommends hepatitis A vaccination for people experiencing homelessness.

One dose of single-antigen hepatitis A vaccine provides up to 95% seroprotection in immunocompetent individuals. Pre-vaccination serologic testing is not required.

Requested Actions:

1. Hospital emergency departments and urgent care centers should offer hepatitis A vaccine to susceptible individuals.
2. Primary care providers should continue their efforts to vaccinate all children and teens with two doses of hepatitis A vaccine. Data from the Vermont Immunization Registry indicates that statewide only 56% of children age 13-17 are fully vaccinated against hepatitis A, and less than 15% of adults age 19-64 years have received a dose of hepatitis A vaccine.
3. Refer uninsured individuals to Health Department Local Offices for free vaccination.
4. Clinical and community-based agencies providing services to people experiencing homelessness and those with substance use disorders, especially those who inject drugs, should work with Health Department [Local Offices](#) to increase hepatitis A vaccination among at-risk individuals. Public health nurses from the Local Offices can provide on-site clinics for susceptible individuals at homeless shelters, syringe services programs and other locations.
5. Check patients' vaccination status in the [Vermont Immunization Registry](#). However, vaccination should not be postponed if vaccination history cannot be obtained or records are unavailable. Enter vaccine doses administered into the [Vermont Immunization Registry](#).
6. Report suspected cases of hepatitis A infection and/or hepatitis A IgM positive laboratory findings to the Epidemiology Program 24/7 at 802-863-7240.

If you have any questions please contact the HAN Coordinator at 802-859-5900 or ythan@vermont.gov

HAN Message Type Definitions

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation may not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Info Service Message: Provides general correspondence from VDH, which is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.