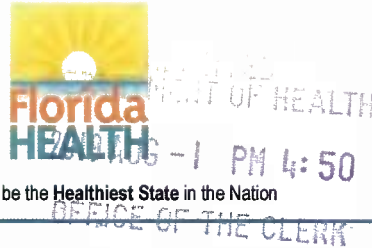


Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Ron DeSantis
Governor

Scott A. Rivkees, MD
State Surgeon General

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

**STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DECLARATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY**

WHEREAS, Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable, communicable disease of the liver caused by the Hepatitis A virus (HAV); and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all states and territories conduct surveillance for acute viral Hepatitis, including Hepatitis A to direct prevention and control activities; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Health issued a Public Health Advisory regarding HAV on November 28, 2018; and

WHEREAS, commonly used alcohol-based hand sanitizing products are not effective against HAV and good hygiene and handwashing protocols should be prioritized; and

WHEREAS, HAV is transmitted from an infected individual directly or indirectly through fecal-oral route; and

WHEREAS, multiple states across the country are being impacted by widespread HAV outbreaks; and

WHEREAS, in Florida, the critically impacted areas are Brevard, Citrus, Glades, Hernando, Hillsborough, Lake, Liberty, Manatee, Marion, Martin, Okeechobee, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, Sumter, Taylor, and Volusia Counties; and

WHEREAS, as of July 27, 2019, there have been 2,582 reported cases of Hepatitis A in Florida; and

WHEREAS, the individuals at the highest risk for developing serious complications from HAV include people with chronic liver disease, and individuals over 60 years of age with a serious underlying medical condition; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis A is a threat to public health in Florida.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Scott A. Rivkees, M.D., State Surgeon General and State Health Officer, by virtue of the authority vested in me by section 381.00315, Florida Statutes, and after consultation with public health officials within the Department of Health, do hereby declare that a public health emergency exists in the state of Florida. In order to respond to this emergency, the following shall commence:

Section 1. In order to protect public health, the Florida Department of Health shall request assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to address this public health emergency.

Section 2. Individuals considered at high risk for contracting HAV or at high risk of suffering serious complications from contracting HAV, who should be vaccinated, include but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Individuals that are homeless;
- b. Intravenous drug users;
- c. Non-intravenous illicit drug users;
- d. Men who have sex with men;
- e. Individuals diagnosed with underlying liver disease;
- f. Individuals in an emergency room or other acute care setting, after being administered an opioid antagonist, such as naloxone;
- g. Individuals with clotting factor disorders;
- h. Individuals working with homeless persons or intravenous drug users outside of health care settings;
- i. Individuals over 60 years of age with a serious underlying medical condition, as determined by their health care provider, in critically impacted counties; and
- j. First responders.

Health care practitioners should actively screen for and vaccinate these patients in order to mitigate further spread of HAV.

Section 3. In order to protect public health, I find it is necessary to advise all public and private entities with restrooms and shower/bathing facilities used by the public to sanitize surfaces in restrooms and shower/bathing areas, at least once per day with a solution of one and two-thirds cups of chlorine bleach per gallon of water, or other Centers for Disease Control and Prevention approved disinfectant solutions and apply those solutions to all surfaces for a minimum of one minute. Beware of bleach fumes when preparing and using the solution.

Section 4. In order to protect public health, I find it is necessary to remind all individuals to practice good handwashing procedures to prevent further spread of HAV. All individuals should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using bathrooms, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food.

Section 5. In order to protect public health, I find it is necessary for all health care providers to be aware that individuals with Hepatitis A infection may present non-specific flu-like (e.g., fever, chills, malaise, decreased appetite) and/or gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g. nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain). Health care providers should consider screening for Hepatitis A in patients with such non-specific symptoms by ordering liver function tests and transaminase levels. These tests should be considered for individuals presenting with jaundice, light-colored stools and dark-colored urine. Health care providers should also wash their hands after treating or having contact with patients positive or suspected positive for HAV.

Section 6. In order to protect public health, I find it is necessary to remind health care providers, hospitals and labs that they are required to immediately report all cases of Hepatitis A to the local county health department to ensure a prompt public health response to prevent disease among close contacts.

Issued this 1st day of August 2019, in Department of Health offices, Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida.



Scott A. Rivkees, M.D.
State Surgeon General