



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Hawaii Department of Health confirms two hepatitis A cases on Kauai

LIHUE, HI – The Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) is investigating two cases of hepatitis A in Kauai residents. Symptoms began from November 2017, and investigation is ongoing. The strain of the virus in both cases appears to be the same one currently circulating in California.

“As our investigators continue their work, we want to remind Hawaii residents that hepatitis A vaccination is highly effective in preventing infection,” said Dr. Sarah Park, state epidemiologist. “With large, multi-state outbreaks occurring across the country, it is important that we all take precautions to prevent hepatitis A infection whether at home, work, recreating, or traveling.”

California’s hepatitis A outbreak originated in San Diego and has spread statewide and to other states. Hawaii travelers to the mainland may become infected during their visit and can accidentally bring that infection home with them.

The virus is found in the stool of people with hepatitis A infection and is usually spread through close personal or sexual contact as well as by eating contaminated food or drinking water. A person who has hepatitis A can easily pass the disease to others within the same household. While vaccination provides the best protection, frequent handwashing with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, or before preparing food can help prevent the spread of hepatitis A. Appropriately cooking food and using safe food handling practices can also help prevent infection.

Hepatitis A is a virus that can cause fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, abdominal discomfort, dark urine, diarrhea, and yellow skin and eyes. Symptoms typically last several weeks to as long as two months. Persons should seek medical attention immediately should they develop symptoms.

The hepatitis A vaccine is included in routine childhood immunizations at age 1 and is recommended for adults who are at risk or want to protect themselves from hepatitis A. People are encouraged to complete the two-dose vaccine series to assure long-term immunity. Individuals who want to be vaccinated are encouraged to contact their health care provider.

A medical advisory has recently been distributed by DOH to physicians statewide. More information about hepatitis A and vaccination is available on the DOH website at:

http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease_listing/hepatitis-a/.

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