



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

VIRGINIA PRESSLER, MD
DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1, 2016

16-041

HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH INVESTIGATING HEPATITIS A VIRUS OUTBREAK ON OAHU

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is investigating a cluster of at least 12 cases of hepatitis A infection in adults on Oahu; six have required hospitalization. Onsets of illness have ranged from June 16 through June 27, 2016.

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. Hepatitis A virus is found in the stool of infected persons and is usually spread by eating contaminated food or drinking water, but can also be spread through close personal/sexual contact. Persons should seek medical attention immediately should they develop symptoms.

“Hepatitis A infection is a vaccine-preventable disease, and fortunately, most children and adolescents have been vaccinated as part of routine childhood vaccination recommendations,” said Health Director Dr. Virginia Pressler. “However, many adults have not been vaccinated and remain susceptible.”

State Epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Park added, “Healthcare providers have been informed and asked to notify us immediately if they have a patient they suspect may be infected. Treatment for hepatitis A infection is supportive only, and while most people will recover

without complications, we are encouraging everyone to review their immunization record and talk to their healthcare provider about vaccination.”

Hepatitis A vaccine is readily available at local pharmacies. Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine, given at least six (6) months apart, are needed for lasting protection. For a list of vaccinating pharmacies, visit

http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/files/2013/07/IMM_Adult_Resource_List.pdf or call the Aloha United Way information and referral line at 2-1-1.

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 foods can also help prevent infection.

Additional information about hepatitis A can be found on the DOH website at <http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/dib/disease/hepatitis-a/>.

#