

HEPATITIS A VACCINATIONS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR FOOD HANDLERS

Background

Hepatitis A is a liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus. The Hepatitis A virus is highly contagious and is usually transmitted through the fecal-oral route, either from person-to-person contact or consumption of contaminated food or water. Contamination can occur when infected persons do not wash their hands properly after going to the bathroom and then touch surfaces and/or food items. A person can become infected with Hepatitis A and spread the virus before they know they are infected.

The best way to prevent a foodborne Hepatitis A outbreak in a food facility is for all food handlers to get vaccinated and practice proper handwashing.

Is the Hepatitis A vaccine safe?

Yes, the vaccine is safe and highly effective in preventing the Hepatitis A virus infection. A person is protected approximately 2 to 4 weeks after the first injection and longer-term defense is gained with the second injection. If you do not remember whether or not you have been vaccinated, repeating the vaccination is not harmful.

Where can I get vaccinated?

1. Ask your employer if they have an **Occupational Health Program** that you can visit to obtain a vaccination.
2. If you have health insurance, you can visit your **Medical Provider**. Be sure to tell them you are a food handler.
3. **Local Pharmacies** may also offer vaccinations. Call before you visit.
4. If you do not have health insurance or are underinsured, you can call the **Sacramento County Public Health Immunization Program** at (916) 875-SHOT (7486) for additional resources and information on where to get vaccinated.

Is there a fee to get vaccinated?

Always check with your occupational or personal health provider first when seeking a vaccination. Medi-Cal covers this vaccine without prior authorization. Individuals who are uninsured, whose insurance does not cover routine vaccinations, or whose occupational groups have been recommended for vaccination can go to a County Public Health Immunization Clinic to obtain the vaccine at no cost.

Employee Health Knowledge

All food employees shall be trained and knowledgeable of the relationship between personal health, hygiene and food safety. Information on this topic can be found in the California Retail Food Code, Chapter 3 Article 3.

Employees are Responsible for Notifying the “Person in Charge”

- Any food handler diagnosed with a Hepatitis A infection is required to notify the “Person in Charge” at the food facility, per CalCode Section 113949.2 .
- Employees may not work with food or utensils if they are sick with acute gastrointestinal illnesses. *Acute gastrointestinal illness is **diarrhea**, either alone or with **vomiting**, fever or abdominal cramps.*

The Person in Charge is Responsible for the Following Requirements

REPORT

Call Sacramento County Environmental Management Department at (916) 875-8440 when:

- A food employee is diagnosed with Hepatitis A, or
- Two or more food facility employees are sick with acute gastrointestinal illness; (diarrhea, either alone or with vomiting, fever or abdominal cramps)

EXCLUDE

Any employee from the food facility that is diagnosed with Hepatitis A. Employees may only return to work when cleared by Sacramento County EMD or Sacramento County Public Health.

RESTRICT

Any food handler from working with exposed food, clean equipment, clean linens, clean utensils and unwrapped single-service articles if food employee is suffering from symptoms of acute gastrointestinal illness or experiencing persistent coughing, sneezing or nasal discharges. Restrictions can be removed by the “Person in Charge” when the food handler states they no longer have symptoms of illness.

Additional Strategies for Preventing Hepatitis A Outbreaks

- Train all food handlers to practice diligent handwashing and good personal hygiene. Hand washing is one of the most effective strategies for reducing transmission since the virus can live on the fingers for up to four hours.
- Keep the handwash sink easily accessible and stocked with soap and paper towels at all times.
- Use utensils and gloves to eliminate bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food.
- Thoroughly and continuously disinfect the facility and food areas using a 100ppm chlorine solution.