



LA County Declares Hepatitis A Outbreak

In 2024, LA County confirmed 165 hepatitis A cases. Seven deaths have been linked to the outbreak. Cases continue to rise.

May 13, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

The [Los Angeles](#) County Department of Public Health declared a communitywide outbreak of [hepatitis A](#) (HAV), according to a [department news release](#).

In 2024, LA County confirmed 165 HAV cases—three times the number of cases reported in 2023.

This year, 29 cases have been reported so far—double the total reported during the same period last year, according [to SFGATE](#).

“The ongoing increase in [hepatitis A](#) cases signals that quick action is needed to protect public health,” said Muntu Davis, MD, MPH, a county health officer in the release.

HAV is an acute form of hepatitis, meaning that it does not cause long-term (chronic) infection. It is spread from one person to another when the feces of someone with HAV gets into another person’s mouth. Even trace amounts of feces can cause an infection.

This outbreak is the worst in the last decade, surpassing the 87 HAV cases confirmed in 2017.

Health officials urge residents to get vaccinated against HAV if they are not already. They also encourage health care providers to [test for HAV](#) if they think a person’s symptoms are consistent with the virus.

Common [symptoms of HAV](#) (and acute hepatitis in general) can include:

- Yellowing of the skin, whites of the eyes and under the fingernails (jaundice);
- Feeling tired and rundown (fatigue);
- Pain in the upper-right abdomen;
- Loss of appetite;
- Weight loss;
- Fever;
- Nausea.

[HAV can be spread](#) in numerous ways, including via:

- Eating food-particularly food that is raw or not thoroughly cooked (shellfish, for example)-that has been handled or prepared by someone who has hepatitis A.
- Drinking water or ice that is contaminated with feces;
- Close personal contact with a person who is infected with the virus;
- Engaging in oral-anal sex (“rimming”) with someone who has hepatitis A;
- Using contaminated water for intravenous drug use.

According to officials, the outbreak comes after a sustained increase in clinical cases and elevated virus levels detected in local wastewater.

The best way to prevent HAV is to be vaccinated. In fact, more than 99% of people who are vaccinated develop immunity against the virus and will never get HAV even if exposed to it.

“The hepatitis A vaccine is safe, effective and offers long-term protection. Getting vaccinated is simple, and it’s one of the most important things you can do for your own health and the health of our entire community,” Davis said. “It is also important for residents to wash their hands with soap and water regularly and especially before eating and preparing food and after using the bathroom.”

To protect community health throughout LA, the Department of Public Health strongly encourages vaccination for:

- Any LA County resident who did not previously receive an HAV vaccination and is seeking

protection;

- People experiencing homelessness;
- People who use drugs (including non-injection).

In general, HAV vaccination is specifically recommended for:

- Anyone who has come in to direct contact with someone who has hepatitis A;
- Adults and children traveling to or working in countries with high or intermediate prevalence of hepatitis A, such as those in Central or South America, Mexico, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe;
- Children and adolescents up to age 18 who live in states or communities where routine vaccination has been implemented because of high disease rates.
- Men who have sex with men;
- People using street drugs;
- Anyone with an occupational risk for hepatitis A;
- Persons with chronic liver disease, such as fatty liver disease, alcoholic liver disease, and hepatitis B or C;
- People who are treated with clotting factor drugs.

To read more, click [#Hepatitis A](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[May is Hepatitis Awareness Month 2025](#)," "[Hepatitis A in America](#)" and "[Rapids Vaccine Rollout Prevented a Hepatitis A Outbreak at LA County Jail](#)."