



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

2525 GRAND AVENUE • LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA 90815 • (562) 570-4000 • FAX: (562) 570-4049

Anissa Davis, M.D., M.P.H.
Health Officer

Hepatitis A Prevention Guidelines for Food Handlers

Outbreaks of Hepatitis A (HAV) are ongoing in San Diego and Santa Cruz counties in persons who are experiencing homelessness and/or using illicit drugs. To date there have been close to 400 cases in San Diego County, making this one of the largest HAV outbreaks in the United States. Cases have also occurred among persons who provide services to the homeless population in these counties. HAV is spread through close contact to feces of infected individuals and/or touching contaminated objects (clothing, syringes, etc.). It is unknown how long the outbreaks will last, but current information and past experience suggests they may continue for months and spread to other counties. Because of the close proximity, it is possible that we will see cases in Long Beach in the near future. Food handlers are not at higher risk for getting hepatitis A disease than other people. However, an infected food handler has the potential to expose many people during one work shift and poses a considerably greater public health risk than non-food handlers.

Please follow these precautions to prevent the spread of Hepatitis A while handling food:

- **Food handlers should never work while ill.** Symptoms of HAV include fever, nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhea, and jaundice (yellow color of skin and eyes). If a food handler is experiencing any of these symptoms, he/she should immediately stop working, inform the manager, and seek medical care.
- Food handlers should always use good handwashing techniques, especially after using the restroom. The proper handwashing method is the following:
 - Use soap and warm, running water
 - Rub hands together vigorously for 20 seconds
 - Wash all surfaces, including backs of hands, wrists, between fingers, tips of fingers, under fingernails
 - Rinse hands well
 - Dry hands with a paper towel, if possible
- Food handlers should minimize bare hand and arm contact with ready-to-eat food. If gloves are used, hands must be washed before putting on gloves. Gloves should be used for only one task and then discarded. Gloves should also be replaced with clean gloves whenever food preparation has been interrupted.
 - **NOTE:** glove usage does not replace the need for good handwashing practices.
- A vaccine that protects against the Hepatitis A virus is available and can be used to prevent infection in food handlers.
 - The Hepatitis A vaccine was licensed in the U.S. in June 1995 and is a safe and effective way to prevent Hepatitis A. The vaccine is a two-dose series, with the second dose given 6 to 12 months after the first dose.

If you have questions or need additional information, please call the Long Beach Health Department at (562) 570-7907.

Sincerely,

Anissa Davis, MD, MPH
City Health Officer and TB Controller
City of Long Beach