

**Communicable Disease Epidemiology
and Immunization Section**

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www.kingcounty.gov/health

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Public Health 
Seattle & King County

Dear Parent or Guardian and School Staff:

There has been a recent increase in hepatitis A infections in east King County (Snoqualmie Valley) with 6 cases in adults reported since February 2011. Hepatitis A is easily spread from person to person by close contact, or through food contaminated by an ill person. Children and teens can also be infected. Hepatitis A vaccine is routinely recommended for all children and this is a good time to check your child's immunization record to make sure that he or she has been vaccinated. If not, please take your child to a health care provider to get vaccinated. It may be helpful to take this letter with you to your child's health care provider.

What is hepatitis A? Hepatitis A is a virus that infects the liver. The symptoms of infection include fever, fatigue, muscle aches, decreased appetite, stomach pain, and jaundice (yellow eyes and skin, or dark tea-colored urine). Young children may have no symptoms or only mild symptoms. Sometimes infection can cause severe liver damage.

How is hepatitis A prevented? The best protection against hepatitis A infection is vaccination. Vaccination includes two doses of hepatitis A vaccine given at least 6 months apart. People who have had hepatitis A infection (diagnosed by a health care provider) are considered protected and do not need hepatitis A vaccination. Protection begins after the first dose and becomes long lasting after the second dose of hepatitis A vaccine. It is also important to wash hands with soap and warm water after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food.

Who should get hepatitis A vaccine?

- Children and adolescents in the U.S. (1 year of age through 18 years of age): Hepatitis A vaccination is routinely recommended for everyone aged 1 year of age through 18 years of age. Most primary care providers for children have hepatitis A vaccine available.
- Adults at higher risk of hepatitis A infection: Hepatitis A vaccination is also recommended for adults who travel to countries with high rates of hepatitis A, men who have sexual contact with other men, users of injection and non-injection illegal drugs, people with chronic liver diseases such as hepatitis B or hepatitis C, people with hemophilia or other conditions treated with clotting factors, and any people who want to prevent getting hepatitis A infection.

Where can I get more information on hepatitis A infection and vaccine? More information on hepatitis A is available in the enclosed fact sheet, which is also at: www.kingcounty.gov/health/cd (click on "H" for hepatitis A). Additional information is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at: www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/

Please contact me or another member of the Public Health communicable disease team at (206) 296-4774, or your child's doctor, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Rachel Brucker, Public Health Nurse
Enc: Hepatitis A Fact Sheet