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# NEWS

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## **Hepatitis A case confirmed in food service worker**

*Central District Health Department offering free vaccine to impacted patrons and employees*

**Ada County** — Central District Health Department (CDHD) has confirmed a case of hepatitis A in a food service worker employed at Saint Lawrence Gridiron, a restaurant located at 705 W. Bannock Street in Boise. Hepatitis A is a virus that affects the liver and can make people sick for a number of weeks. To-date, the food service worker is the only hepatitis A case in Idaho associated with this restaurant.

The food service employee worked various days and shifts during the period they were contagious. Based on the infectious period of hepatitis A, anyone who ate at Saint Lawrence Gridiron during the following timeframes should check their immunization records to see if they have received a hepatitis A vaccine:

- June 21 to June 24
- June 27 to July 1
- July 5 to July 8
- July 11 to July 14

The risk of becoming infected with hepatitis A through an infected food service worker is low but CDHD encourages anyone who was a patron during this timeframe and has not received a hepatitis A vaccine, or is unsure about their vaccine status, to consider getting vaccinated. CDHD is offering free hepatitis A vaccine to anyone who may have been exposed at this restaurant between June 21 and July 14.

**In order for the hepatitis A vaccine to help prevent possible transmission, patrons must get the vaccine within two weeks of the date they may have been exposed.**

“Though public transmission risk is quite low, we recommend that patrons who ate at Saint Lawrence Gridiron during this timeframe to consider getting vaccinated and watch for symptoms of hepatitis A,” said Lindsay Haskell, staff epidemiologist with CDHD. “Symptoms to watch for include abdominal pain,

dark urine, fatigue, fever, jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), light-colored stools,” said Haskell. Other symptoms may include loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting. If symptoms occur, seek medical attention.

Symptoms of hepatitis A usually start within 28 days of exposure to the virus or within a range of 15-50 days. People infected with hepatitis A are most contagious from two weeks before onset of symptoms to one week afterwards. Not everyone infected with hepatitis A will experience all of the symptoms and some will not have any symptoms.

### **Make an Appointment / More Information**

Those with questions about their immunization record, who wish to make a vaccine appointment or have questions related to hepatitis A and potential exposure at this restaurant may call 208-321-2222.

A Frequently Asked Questions document about hepatitis A is available at [www.cdhd.idaho.gov/dac-hepA](http://www.cdhd.idaho.gov/dac-hepA).

### **How Hepatitis A Spreads**

Hepatitis A easily spreads by entering the mouth after someone touches an object, food or drink contaminated with the virus. If an infected person does not wash their hands well, especially after using the bathroom, small amounts of virus can spread from the hands of the infected person to other objects, surfaces, and food.

### **Some people are at a higher risk for getting hepatitis A, including:**

- People who are living with or caring for a person who already has hepatitis A
- People living homeless, especially those living unsheltered without good access to sanitation, hygiene and handwashing facilities
- People who have sex with someone who has hepatitis A
- Men who have sex with men
- Illicit drug users (does not have to be injection drugs)
- People with clotting disorders like hemophilia
- International travelers
- People with chronic liver disease, including hepatitis B and hepatitis C are at increased risk for severe infections.

### **Preventing Hepatitis A**

Hepatitis A vaccination is the best way to prevent hepatitis A. The shot is safe and effective; anyone who wants to reduce their risk of hepatitis A should get vaccinated. Anyone who is in the higher risk groups should receive the hepatitis A vaccine to protect themselves. Central District Health Department is offering free vaccine to qualifying individuals. Visit [cdhd.idaho.gov/dac-hepA](http://cdhd.idaho.gov/dac-hepA) to learn more.

## **Idaho's Hepatitis A Investigation**

CDHD, along with state public health, has been investigating a hepatitis A outbreak that began emerging in early 2019. To date, 18 cases of hepatitis A have been confirmed in Ada and Elmore counties, which are served by CDHD. Neighboring counties including Canyon, Blaine and Twin Falls have also seen a recent increase in hepatitis A cases, bringing the state count to 33 since Jan. 1, 2019. In 2018, only eight cases of hepatitis A were reported in Idaho; one of those cases was in Ada County.

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