

## Public Health Emergency Declared in State Vaccines for Hepatitis A Covered by Florida Blue

On August 1, 2019, State Surgeon General Scott A. Rivkees, M.D., declared a [public health emergency](#) in Florida in response to the significant increase in the reported cases of the hepatitis A virus (HAV) in the state. We are reminding you that we cover vaccines for children and adults for preventable diseases, including HAV.

### What You Need to Know

As the number of cases continue to increase weekly, our medical directors are reiterating the Florida Department of Health's (FDOH) key points to providers:

- The case count for 2019 as of August 10 is 2,192 and continues to increase. This compares to 548 total cases reported in 2018. Nearly 100 percent of these cases (98 percent) have been acquired in Florida.
- The 17 critically impacted counties are: Brevard, Citrus, Glades, Hernando, Hillsborough, Lake, Liberty, Manatee, Marion, Martin, Okeechobee, Orange, Pasco, Pinellas, Sumter, Taylor and Volusia, with Pasco County having the highest number of cases.
- The most commonly reported risk factor is drug use, reported by 56 percent of those infected (injected and non-injected drugs).
- Cases have been identified in several restaurant employees, but no cases have been traced to contaminated food products at any restaurant.
- Owners of public and private entities with shared restrooms and shower/bathing facilities used by the public should sanitize these areas daily with a solution of 1 2/3 cups of chlorine bleach per gallon of water or any disinfectant solutions approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These solutions should be applied to all surfaces for a minimum of one minute.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers don't kill HAV germs. Good handwashing procedures should be used to prevent further spread of HAV. This includes washing hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Providers should have a low threshold for testing for HAV in individuals with abnormal liver function and unclear etiology.
- High-risk individuals should be vaccinated:
  - Homeless individuals
  - IV or other illicit drug users
  - Men who have sex with men
  - Individuals with underlying liver disease
  - Individuals in the ER after being administered an opioid antagonist
  - Individuals with clotting disorders
  - Individuals over the age of 60 with serious underlying medical conditions
  - First responders
- HAV is a reportable disease. Here is the [link](#) to report and for more information.

### **Here's Where to Go for More Information**

You can find additional information about the CDC recommendations regarding HAV [here](#). FDOH provides this HAV [alert](#) for health care providers. For more information, call the FDOH HAV hotline: 844-225-5364 or email: [hepa@flhealth.gov](mailto:hepa@flhealth.gov).

We support the providers who follow appropriate standards of care and guide our members to the proper actions to keep them and their families healthy and safe. Remember, Florida Blue covers both the Havrix and Vaqta vaccines for HAV. Florida county health departments will vaccinate uninsured and underinsured individuals requiring the vaccine.