



Counseling Guide for Outreach Workers to Address Vaccine Hesitancy Among At-Risk Adults during Outbreaks of Hepatitis A



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About the Guide

The Vaccine Counseling Guide was developed to help vaccinators and outreach workers respond to individuals at risk for hepatitis A who are hesitant about getting vaccinated. Potential responses can and should be tailored to the specific situation; these are provided as a general guide and may be used in part or in their entirety.

Populations recommended for vaccination during the hepatitis A outbreaks include:

- ➔ People who use drugs (whether injected or not)
- ➔ People experiencing unstable housing or homelessness
- ➔ Men who have sex with men
- ➔ People who are currently or were recently in jail or prison
- ➔ People with chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis, hepatitis B or hepatitis C

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The statements and beliefs below reflect client beliefs that were shared from outreach workers in highly affected areas.

Current information, technical guidance and educational materials related to the hepatitis A outbreaks can be found at: www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HepAOutbreak

Basic Knowledge (unaware, lacking basic information)

Proactive messages

I'd like to explain why we want to vaccinate you against hepatitis A. There is an outbreak of hepatitis A in this community, and we want to make sure you are protected and don't get sick. We have already had [X] cases in [this location].

Here's an information sheet on hepatitis A. (NOTE: Use local resources or CDC materials.)

Client statement or beliefs	Potential responses
I've never heard of hepatitis A.	Many people haven't heard of hepatitis A. It is a virus that can hurt your liver and make you very sick. Some people have died from the infection. There is an outbreak of hepatitis A in this community, and we want to make sure you are protected and don't get sick.
I don't know about hepatitis A and/or how it is spread.	Hepatitis A is a virus that can hurt your liver and make you very sick. The hepatitis A virus is found in the stool/poop/blood of a person who is infected, and the virus can live on surfaces for months. The virus can be easily spread from person to person and is spreading among people who use drugs.
I would never eat poop.	The hepatitis A virus is very hardy and easily spread. People who are sick with hepatitis A often have diarrhea. If that person doesn't wash his/her hands thoroughly after going to the bathroom and then touches something, like a door knob or grocery cart, the virus can stay on that object. If you later touch the same object, the virus could get on your hands. Then, if you eat something and haven't washed your hands carefully, you could get infected with the virus.
I don't know what the vaccine is for.	The vaccine works to protect you from getting infected with the hepatitis A virus. It's safe and effective, and you only need one shot to protect you from getting infected in this outbreak.

Perceptions of Risk

Proactive messages

There is an outbreak of hepatitis A in your community. We want to protect you from being infected by giving you this vaccine.

Last year, we had only [X] number of cases of hepatitis A for the entire year. This year, we have [X] cases and, unfortunately, [X] people have died.

[X] people have died from hepatitis A, including some people who *[went to this clinic/lived in this town.]*

Client statement or beliefs	Potential responses
<p>I'm healthy. I don't need to be vaccinated.</p>	<p>Hepatitis A can affect anyone, including healthy people. Let's keep you healthy by giving you the vaccine.</p> <p>The vaccine can keep you from getting sick. <i>[Use anecdotes from the community if possible, such as we just had a 17-year-old who was hospitalized for 6 weeks.]</i></p> <p>We also want to make sure you protect your family and your community. If you get sick, you could spread the virus to others.</p>
<p>I'm not at risk - I don't use drugs.</p>	<p>You don't have to use drugs to be at risk, just being around someone who has been sick puts you at risk of getting infected. Even though this outbreak seems more likely to affect people who use drugs (or who are experiencing homelessness), anyone who is unvaccinated can get hepatitis A. Let's protect you with this shot.</p>
<p>I don't hang out with people who use drugs.</p>	<p>You don't have to hang out with people who use drugs to get sick. The virus can easily spread if a person you do hang out with is sick and doesn't wash his/her hands thoroughly after going to the bathroom.</p> <p>The virus can be easily spread from person to person from close contact, sex with an infected person, or getting the virus from a surface or object touched by an infected person. The hepatitis A virus is very hardy and easily spread. And people who are sick with hepatitis A often have diarrhea. If that person doesn't wash his/her hands thoroughly after going to the bathroom and then touches something, like a door knob or grocery cart, the virus can be left on that object. If you later touch that object, the virus could get on your hands. Then if you eat something and haven't washed your hands carefully, then you could get infected with the virus.</p>

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Perceptions of Risk - continued	
I don't inject drugs.	If you use any drugs, that can put you at risk for getting hepatitis A. Being around someone who has been sick puts you at risk of getting infected. Let's protect you with this shot.
I already have hepatitis. I've been treated / cured of hepatitis.	There are different types of hepatitis. Hepatitis B is different from hepatitis C, and each are caused by different viruses. If you've ever had hepatitis B or C, that makes it even more important for you to get vaccinated against hepatitis A. When you have other liver diseases or problems, getting hepatitis A can cause serious complications and make you really sick.
I'm pregnant.	<i>(NOTE: Hepatitis A vaccine can be administered during all stages of pregnancy, however the recommendation is limited to those identified as being at risk.)</i> If you are pregnant, that's an even more important reason to get vaccinated. We want to protect you and your baby. Getting hepatitis A could make you both very sick.
I'm sick this week.	This shot can be given even if you have a mild illness. It is safe and effective.

Symptoms and Perceptions of Severity	
<p>Proactive messages</p> <p>Getting infected with the hepatitis A virus can make you sick for weeks and even months. Did you know that some people have died from getting hepatitis A? The vaccine can prevent you from getting sick.</p>	
Client statement or beliefs	Potential responses
I don't have any symptoms.	<p>We want to keep it that way. The shot can prevent you from becoming sick and getting symptoms. Getting hepatitis A can make you sick for weeks and even months.</p> <p>When you do get symptoms, it is too late to get the hepatitis A vaccine. The vaccine prevents you from getting sick from hepatitis A in the first place.</p>

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Symptoms and Perceptions of Severity - continued

<p>Hepatitis A isn't that serious.</p>	<p>Hepatitis A can be serious for many people. Some people are sick for months and some have to stay in the hospital. Some people have even died.</p> <p>Did you know that some people <i>[or X people in our community]</i> have died from getting hepatitis A?</p> <p>As many as half <i>[or actual community percentage]</i> of people who get sick have had to be in the hospital, sometimes for many weeks. But the vaccine can prevent you from getting sick.</p>
<p>I don't know anyone who's sick.</p>	<p>You may think you don't know anyone who's sick. The virus can be spread even if a person doesn't feel sick or doesn't have any symptoms. In fact, a person most easily spreads the virus and is most contagious right before getting symptoms. That's why we want to protect you with this vaccine.</p>
<p>I've got a strong immune system.</p>	<p>Even people with strong immune systems can get sick with hepatitis A. A strong immune system is not enough to protect you – but the vaccine will.</p> <p>Getting the vaccine not only protects you, but also protects your family, friends, and community. If someone you know who is older or has health problems gets hepatitis A, it can be very serious and even kill them. That's why we want everyone who's at risk to get vaccinated – to protect you and them.</p>
<p>I don't care if I get sick.</p>	<p>I care if you get sick, and I bet many of your friends and family care too.</p> <p>Did you know that some people <i>[or X people in our community]</i> have died from getting hepatitis A? And even for healthy people, getting infected can make you sick for weeks and even months. As many as half <i>[or actual community percentage]</i> of people who get sick have had to be in the hospital, sometimes for many weeks. But the vaccine can prevent you from getting sick.</p>

Vaccine Concerns / Medical History

Proactive messages

I'd like to vaccinate you against hepatitis A because there is an outbreak occurring in the community. Only one shot is needed to protect you from getting infected in this outbreak.

Additional messages, if needed:

- This is not a vaccine you have to get every year.
- You may have heard you need two shots. To protect you during this outbreak only one shot is needed. But getting the second shot gives you long-term protection. You can get a second shot at any time 6 months after the first shot when it's convenient for you.

Client statement or beliefs	Potential responses
I'm afraid of needles.	<p>I'm sorry; many people feel that way. This vaccine can prevent you from getting sick and spreading the virus to others. One quick stick can save your life and protect your family, friends, and community.</p> <p>It can also keep you well so you don't get sick for weeks, spend months in the hospital, or are unable to work or care for your family.</p>
I've been vaccinated.	<p>Many people believe they have been vaccinated. Usually they were vaccinated for a different type of hepatitis, hepatitis B. Let's see if we can get your records.</p> <p>We've found that most people who think they have been vaccinated really haven't been for hepatitis A. Since we can't check your records, let's play it safe and give you the shot.</p> <p>If you have been vaccinated, an extra shot won't cause any problems. And if you haven't been vaccinated, this shot can protect you and your loved ones from getting sick.</p>
The vaccine will make me sick.	<p>We know from years of giving people the vaccine, the vaccine is safe and effective and does not make people sick. The most common thing that could happen is that your arm might be a little sore. But hepatitis A can make you very sick.</p> <p>We have no reports of anyone having problems from getting this vaccine and have been giving it at this <i>[site]</i> for <i>[time]</i>. The vaccine has been given to people for more than 25 years.</p> <p>This vaccine uses dead virus and is one of the safest vaccines we have.</p>

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Vaccine Concerns / Medical History - continued

How do I know the vaccine is safe?	We know from years of giving the vaccine to people that the vaccine is safe and effective and does not make people sick. Hepatitis A can make you very sick.
How long will this one shot protect me?	We know giving people just one shot will protect them and help stop the outbreak. The shot can give you protection for many years. Getting a second shot gives you long-term protection. You can get a second shot at any time 6 months after the first shot when it's convenient for you.
You are trying to give me one shot. Why do most people get two shots?	We know giving people just one shot will protect them and help stop the outbreak. You can get the second shot anytime 6 months after the first shot. The second shot will give you long-term protection.
Does the vaccine work all the time?	Yes, the vaccine works and is very effective. Just one shot can prevent you from getting hepatitis A in an outbreak.
Can you come vaccinate my friends?	We can vaccinate your friends. <i>[Insert information as appropriate.]</i> Can you call them to come here now? OR, here's a card you can give them about where to go to get vaccinated. <i>(NOTE: Use CDC Pocket Card that allows local information to be inserted.)</i>
[X person] had hepatitis A and was around my child. My kid is under 5. Can my kid/baby be vaccinated?	<i>(NOTE: Dependent upon availability of pediatric vaccines.)</i> Yes, we can and should vaccinate your child. The vaccine is safe for children. Let me give you a location where you can take your child to get the hepatitis A shot that is just for children. You may also want to check with your child's doctor. The hepatitis A shot is usually given when a child is one-year old.
How safe is this shot for my child?	This shot is safe and effective and is recommended for any child one year or older.

Cognitive Barriers	
Client statement or beliefs	Potential responses
I don't have time.	The vaccination will only take a short time. Let's do it now so you don't have to come back or wait at the clinic.
I'm not sure I want to get vaccinated.	I'd really like you to get vaccinated. There is an outbreak in our area, and the vaccine not only protects you, but protects the whole community.
How do I know I can trust you? I do not know you or these people, and you want me to get a shot. Where can I go get the shot from a doctor?	Let me explain who I am and why I am here. <i>[Fill in information as appropriate.]</i> We are trying to vaccinate as many people as possible, and I came to help. Can I answer any questions about myself to make you feel more comfortable? I'd like to vaccinate you right now so you can get protected now.
Who do I call if I get sick?	Here's information about the symptoms of hepatitis A and where you should go if you get sick. <i>(NOTE: Use CDC Pocket Card that allows local information to be inserted.)</i>

PEP or Postexposure Prophylaxis	
Client statement or beliefs	Potential responses
I've been around someone with hepatitis A. Will the vaccine protect me from getting hepatitis A?	Giving the vaccine within 2 weeks of someone being exposed to the virus can protect them from getting sick. But the vaccine only works if it is given in this time frame. If you have been exposed to someone with hepatitis A in the last 2 weeks, then getting the vaccine can help you from getting infected. If you have been exposed to someone with hepatitis A and it happened more than 2 weeks ago, it's too late for the vaccine to prevent you from getting sick.