

February 25, 2019

Dear Food Facility Manager:

As you may be aware, the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) is investigating an outbreak of hepatitis A in the Albuquerque metro area. Hepatitis A is a virus spread through person to person contact, primarily affecting adults who use injection and non-injection drugs, and/or are experiencing homelessness, as well as their close contacts. These locally occurring cases are part of a larger ongoing national outbreak.

Hepatitis A is easily transmitted by consuming food or beverages handled by infected persons. As such, every ill food worker situation could present a significant risk of infection to large numbers of people. Other states experiencing this outbreak have seen crossover of hepatitis A infections into food service establishments.

In response to this ongoing outbreak, the City of Albuquerque Environmental Health Department is asking for your help to prevent possible outbreaks in your food establishment by taking the following steps:

- Ensure each food worker understands the associated symptoms, transmission, and, illness notification requirements for hepatitis A.
- Ensure each food worker follows safe food handling practices.
- **Ensure that food handlers are washing their hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds immediately before preparing foods; before putting on disposable gloves to start working with food; before dispensing or serving food; handling clean tableware and serving utensils in the food service area, and after using the restroom.**

Hepatitis A is a reportable disease. Anyone who has been in contact with a person who has had a **confirmed** hepatitis A diagnosis should notify the NMDOH at (505) 841-4116 to discuss their risk. If a food worker has any of the symptoms of hepatitis A, please inform them **NOT TO GO TO WORK** and visit a medical provider for testing. It may be possible for vaccination to be given to other employees and consumers who may have been exposed to hepatitis A by a sick food worker. Illness can be prevented in those exposed, but only if they receive treatment within 14 days of exposure, so timely reporting of illness is vital to prevent additional infections.

In order to receive immediate health advisories, we encourage all facilities to provide an email address at: <https://www.cabq.gov/foodalert>

If you have general questions about hepatitis A and foodservice, please contact the City of Albuquerque Environmental Health Department at (505) 768-2632.

For additional information on hepatitis A, please visit:
<https://www.cabq.gov/environmentalhealth/news/hepatitis-a-outbreak>

We thank you for your attention.