**Hepatitis A Press Release**

**Key items to include:**

* Description of local outbreak or situation creating a concern
* Public health response activities
* Who to contact for information
* Description of hepatitis A symptoms, treatment and prevention

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact: (Name or Office)

Date Phone Number

Headline ((Health Department) Announces/Advises……)

Insert details of situation and public health response activities

Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease that results from infection with the hepatitis A virus. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months. Hepatitis A is usually spread when a person ingests fecal matter, even in microscopic amounts, from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by the feces or stool of an infected person. Signs and symptoms of hepatitis A can include the following:

* Fever
* Fatigue
* Loss of appetite
* Nausea
* Vomiting
* Abdominal discomfort
* Dark urine
* Clay-colored bowel movement
* Joint pain
* Jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes)

Signs and symptoms usually appear 2-4 weeks after exposure, although they may occur 2-7 weeks after exposure. Children under 6 years of age with hepatitis A often do not have or show few signs and symptoms.

People exposed to the hepatitis A virus should receive either hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin if exposure occurred within the past 14 days. Those who have had hepatitis A disease or previously received 2 doses of the hepatitis A vaccine do not need to be immunized for hepatitis A again.

Vaccination is an effective way to prevent hepatitis A. The first dose of vaccine is given to children at 12-23 months of age and the second dose 6 months later. Children that are not vaccinated at 1 year of age are recommended to receive two doses at least six months apart. Hepatitis A vaccine is not recommended for children under 1 year old. Adults who have not had two doses of hepatitis A vaccine and have not had hepatitis A can receive the vaccine. Pregnant women can receive the hepatitis A vaccine. Those unsure of their vaccination status or who have not received the vaccine or who have had only one dose, should consult their healthcare provider.

People infected with the hepatitis A virus are most infectious the first and second week prior to symptom onset and infectiousness starts to diminish after symptoms appear. Those possibly exposed are urged to be particularly thorough in hand washing after toileting and prior to food preparation to avoid any potential further spread of disease. They should not prepare or handle food for anyone outside of their immediate family. Hand washing should include vigorous soaping of the hands. All surfaces should be washed including the back of the hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails. Hands should then be thoroughly rinsed with running water.

Those suspecting that they have symptoms of hepatitis A should contact their healthcare provider. Persons and healthcare providers with questions or needing more information on hepatitis A can contact the (health department name) at (phone number).

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