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Director of Health Announces Additional State Funding to Combat Hepatitis A Outbreak *\$650,000 in funding to be dispersed to local jurisdictions*

COLUMBUS— Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Amy Acton, MD, MPH, has announced a one-time commitment of \$650,000 in state funding to be shared with local health departments to combat the ongoing hepatitis A outbreak in the state.

“It’s a new day in public health in Ohio as these funds are targeted to help local health departments prevent and control hepatitis A through education, surveillance, and vaccination of high-risk groups in our state,” said Director Acton. “We must work together at the state and local level to protect and improve the health of all Ohioans.”

The funding will be allocated based on the needs of each health jurisdiction. All local health departments in Ohio have been sent a short funding application due back to the state by June 4, 2019.

Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable liver disease that usually spreads when a person ingests fecal matter — even in microscopic amounts — from contact with objects, food or drinks contaminated by the stool of an infected person. Hepatitis A can also be spread from close personal contact with an infected person, such as through sex.

People at high risk for hepatitis A in this outbreak include:

- People who use drugs (injection or non-injection)
- People experiencing unstable housing or homelessness
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- People who are currently or were recently incarcerated
- People with chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C

Symptoms of hepatitis A include fatigue, low appetite, stomach pain, nausea, clay-colored stools and jaundice. People with hepatitis A can experience mild illness lasting a few weeks to severe illness lasting several months.

ODH declared a statewide hepatitis A outbreak in June 2018 with outbreaks currently occurring in several states across the U.S., including neighboring states of Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan and West Virginia.

Vaccination is the best protection against the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases, including hepatitis A. Dr. Acton recommends high-risk individuals contact their local health department or healthcare provider to get vaccinated. As of May 20, 2019, Ohio has 2,298 cases related to the outbreak, with 76 counties reporting at least one case. Additional information, as well as outbreak statistics can be found [here](#).

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