



## For Immediate Release

January 12, 2018

### Northern Michigan Hepatitis A Cases Linked to Southeast Michigan Outbreak

State laboratory tests confirmed this week that five cases of the Hepatitis A virus reported in Northern Lower Michigan have officially been linked to the larger Southeast Michigan Outbreak of Hepatitis A. Four of these cases have been reported in Grand Traverse County and one in Leelanau County.

Since August 1, 2016, there have been 677 cases of Hepatitis A identified across the state, primarily in southeastern Michigan. 82% of the cases have been severe enough to lead to hospitalization. Both the Grand Traverse County Health Department and the Benzie-Leelanau Health Department are working with state officials and participating in the State's Community Health Emergency Coordination Center (CHECC) to monitor Hepatitis A cases, as well as spread awareness about Hepatitis A in our community.

Hepatitis A can be a serious and contagious liver disease. Although not all people infected with the Hepatitis A virus experience illness, symptoms can include:

- nausea and vomiting
- abdominal pain
- feeling tired/fatigue
- fever
- joint pain
- loss of appetite
- yellowing of the skin and eyes
- dark urine
- pale-colored feces

Hepatitis A virus often spreads by eating contaminated food or water, between sexual partners, or through close personal contact while living with an infected person. Individuals that are at a higher risk for getting the Hepatitis A virus include the following: the homeless or those living with transient housing, persons who are incarcerated, illicit drug users (both injection and non-injection drugs), persons who have sexual activities with someone infected with Hepatitis A virus, men who have sexual relations with men, and persons who have close contact, care for, or live with someone who has the Hepatitis A virus.

The Hepatitis A virus is vaccine preventable. While the vaccine is recommended as a part of the routine childhood vaccination schedule, many adults have not yet been vaccinated. "We recommend that

everyone be vaccinated against Hepatitis A,” said Wendy Hirschenberger, Health Officer for Grand Traverse County Health Department. The best way to reduce the risk of getting Hepatitis A is to get vaccinated. It is also recommended to regularly wash your hands after using the bathroom and before preparing meals for yourself and others. In addition, don’t share toothbrushes or eating utensils, do not have sex with someone who has a Hepatitis A infection, and do not share food and/or drinks with other people.

Individuals who believe they have been exposed to Hepatitis A or who have symptoms consistent with the virus, should contact their healthcare provider immediately. Anyone who wants to be vaccinated should contact their healthcare provider or their local health department:

Benzie-Leelanau Health Department at 231-256-0200  
Grand Traverse County Health Department at 231-995-6131  
Health Department of Northwest Michigan 800-432-4121

For more information about the southeastern Michigan outbreak of the Hepatitis A virus, please visit: <http://michigan.gov/hepatitisAoutbreak>

For general information about the Hepatitis A virus, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/>

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