

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Matthew Herrick
812-268-0224
Sullivan County Health Department

HEALTH OFFICIALS INVESTIGATE HEPATITIS A CASE IN FOOD HANDLER

Sullivan County health officials have investigated a case of hepatitis A in a local food handler and have determined that the risk of infection is very low for patrons who visited the restaurant earlier this month. Although additional cases are unlikely to occur, the food establishment is working with us to prevent any new cases from arising in the community as a result of this case. There have been no other suspected cases arising from this case at this time.

Any risk to other employees and patrons is being evaluated and further guidance based upon determined risk will be forthcoming. The Sullivan County Health Department is being assisted by the Indiana State Department of Health. The restaurant has voluntarily closed for deep cleaning and food handlers are being given the hepatitis A vaccine.

Indiana is one of several states experiencing a hepatitis A outbreak, so all residents are urged to consult their healthcare providers and pharmacies for a hepatitis A vaccine as preventive care. Careful hand-washing with soap and running water is also recommended, especially before preparing food.

As of May 31, 2019, the state health department has confirmed 1500 outbreak-related cases in Indiana, which typically sees about 20 cases in a 12-month period. None of the outbreak cases has been caused by an infected food worker.

Indiana law has required a hepatitis A vaccine for school admission since 2014, and the vaccine was required for students entering sixth and 12th grades in 2018, so many students have already been vaccinated.

Hepatitis A is usually transmitted person-to-person through fecal-oral routes or by consuming contaminated food or water. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies those most at risk during this outbreak as people who use illicit drugs, the homeless, men who have sex with men and those who are incarcerated. Indiana health officials have been working to educate the public, restaurants, jails, groups that serve homeless populations and those who use illicit drugs about the outbreak and ways to prevent the disease. ISDH also provides outbreak updates on its [website](#).

Anyone who is exhibiting symptoms of hepatitis A should contact a healthcare provider immediately and refrain from preparing food for others. Symptoms can include fatigue, loss of appetite, stomach pain, nausea and jaundice, which usually appear within two months of infection. Individuals can become ill 15 to 50 days after being exposed to the virus. A doctor can determine if someone has hepatitis A with a blood test.

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