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Riverside County health officials: Hepatitis A case from Riverside tied to outbreak in San Diego County

A Riverside man has been diagnosed with the same strain of hepatitis A that has been connected to a deadly outbreak in San Diego County, but Riverside County health officials say the patient has recovered and does not appear to have spread the illness.

Hepatitis A, a communicable disease of the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV), can be prevented by vaccine. Hepatitis A is usually spread when a person ingests the virus from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by feces from an infected person.

Outbreaks have been reported in San Diego, Los Angeles and Santa Cruz counties, mostly among homeless populations and IV drug users. In San Diego County, more than 500 cases and 19 deaths have been reported. In Riverside County, there have been seven hepatitis A cases reported and no deaths so far this year. None of these prior cases was linked to other outbreaks.

It is possible to be infected and show no symptoms, but still be contagious. Among the symptoms are fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, jaundice, nausea and vomiting.

While the Riverside patient has worked in San Diego County, Riverside County health officials said he is not homeless and does not use IV drugs. Health officials submitted blood samples from the patient to the state for genotype testing and it was recently confirmed it matched the hepatitis A strain from San Diego County. That means the source of the infection was in San Diego County.

“There’s no indication there are other related cases currently, but we are continuing to monitor the state and local situation closely,” said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, public health officer for Riverside County. “If we do detect further cases, the system is already in place to respond quickly and to make sure all our residents stay protected.”

The best way to prevent transmission of the illness is to practice good hygiene, like washing your hands thoroughly after using the bathroom, and getting the hepatitis A vaccine, which is available from many medical providers.

For more information, click the link: www.rivcoph.org