



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

701 OCEAN STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073

(831) 454-2000 WWW.SANTACRUZCOUNTY.US

CARLOS J. PALACIOS, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

## PRESS RELEASE

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### ADDITIONAL RESPONSE TO HEPATITIS A INCREASE

The Santa Cruz County Public Health Division is taking additional steps in response to the ongoing increase in hepatitis A cases in Santa Cruz County.

Previously, the County conducted targeted public education, a series of vaccination clinics for vulnerable populations and extensive outreach to inform vulnerable individuals about minimizing the risk of contracting the hepatitis A virus.

Most cases have occurred in individuals with poor access to sanitary facilities. Hepatitis A is an inflammation of the liver and is usually transmitted through the fecal-oral route, including person-to-person contact, touching contaminated surfaces or consuming contaminated food or water. For more information, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav>.

Symptoms of hepatitis A include jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, and light-colored stools. Symptoms usually appear over a number of days and last less than two months. However, some people can be ill for as long as six months. Hepatitis A can sometimes cause liver failure and even death.

Typically, Santa Cruz County Public Health officials will see 1-2 cases of hepatitis A per year. The County has identified more than 60 cases in the last five months, including a small number of cases outside vulnerable populations. There have been no fatalities.



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Due to the increasing numbers of cases, Public Health Officer Dr. Arnold Leff is giving additional direction to the community, including:

- Direction to business owners on maintaining healthy environments, focusing on proper cleaning procedures for cleaning public restrooms and proper food handling techniques. These include:
  - Cleaning and disinfecting bathrooms using chlorine bleach, including multiple times per day in heavily trafficked areas.
  - Properly cleaning hard surfaces, including food prep areas.
  - Assuring that employees thoroughly wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, rinsing with clean water and properly drying hands and arms.
  - The use and proper disposal of latex gloves while cleaning.
  
- Proper vaccinations will help reduce the spread of hepatitis A.

Individuals with questions about hepatitis A should contact their primary care physician. Vaccines are available at no cost from your primary care physician for those with insurance, or through local safety-net clinics.

Additional information is available at [www.healthservicesagency.org/hepa](http://www.healthservicesagency.org/hepa).