**HEPATITIS A VIRUS HEALTH ALERT**

LETTERHEAD

Date

Dear Colleague:

**Details of situation**: [insert info]

**Background:** Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver. The incubation period for hepatitis A is approximately 28 days (range 15-50 days). The virus is ingested by mouth from fecal-contaminated food or drink, or through close personal contact with an infected person. Those with the hepatitis A virus are most infectious 2 weeks prior to symptom onset. Symptoms include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal discomfort, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain, and jaundice. Symptoms can last for several weeks and typically do not last more than 2 months. Children under 6 years of age with hepatitis A are often asymptomatic.

The majority of exposures have usually occurred before the patient presents to the healthcare provider. Thorough hand washing after visits to the restroom, before touching food or drink, and after changing a baby’s diaper can assist in mitigating spread.

**Vaccination:** All patients should be kept current with hepatitis A vaccination. Check the vaccination history of all patients and offer vaccine to anyone that is not up to date with the vaccine schedule. Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine given 6 months apart remains an effective way to prevent disease and outbreaks. Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for:

* All children at age 1 year
* Food service workers or other food handlers
* International travelers, including on cruise ships
* Men who have sex with men
* Drug users, injection and non-injection
* Persons with clotting-factor disorders
* Persons that work with non-human primates or with hepatitis A in a research laboratory
* Persons with chronic liver disease, including HBV- and HCV-infected persons with chronic liver disease
* Family and care givers of recent adoptees from countries where hepatitis A is common
* Anyone else seeking long-term protection

Detailed guidelines for hepatitis A vaccination are available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hepa/default.htm#vacc>

**Lab Confirmation Test**: Serological testing is required to confirm the diagnosis of hepatitis A. The confirmatory test for hepatitis A is IgM anti-HAV.

**Disease Reporting Requirements/Statute**: Several Texas laws ([Health & Safety Code, Chapters 81, 84, and 87](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/?link=HS)) require specific information regarding notifiable conditions be provided to DSHS. Health care providers, hospitals, laboratories, schools, childcare facilities and others are required to report patients who are suspected of having hepatitis A ([Chapter 97, Title 25, Texas Administrative Code](http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac%24ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=4&ti=25&pt=1&ch=97) ).

**In Texas, confirmed or suspected acute hepatitis A cases are required to be reported within 1 work day. Hepatitis A reports should be made to (LHD/HSR information here).**

**Treatment and Postexposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Recommendations**: There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A, only supportive treatment and management of the infection.

* Household and sexual contacts should be identified immediately and those that are unvaccinated should be offered post exposure prophylaxis with immune globulin (IG) or vaccine as follows:
	+ For persons 1-40 years of age, offer vaccine within 2 weeks of exposure.
	+ For persons <1 or >40, immunocompromised, diagnosed with liver disease, or cannot receive vaccine, provide IG within 2 weeks of exposure.
* Contacts who have received one dose of hepatitis A vaccine at least one month prior to exposure do not need post-exposure prophylaxis.
* Generally, IG and vaccine are not recommended for school or work contacts with the following exceptions:
	+ At day care centers, IG or vaccine should be offered if a day care attendee or employee is IgM-positive or if 2 household contacts of an employee or attendee are IgM-positive.
	+ If a food-handler is diagnosed with hepatitis A, the other food handlers should be offered IG or vaccine. Patrons generally do not need prophylaxis although it may be considered if the food-handler prepared food that was not heated, had diarrhea, and IG or vaccine can be provided within 2 weeks of exposure.

**Exclusion Guidelines**: Children and adults who work as food-handlers or attend or work in childcare or school setting should be kept out of school and/or work for seven days after the onset of symptoms. Children with a fever over 100 degrees are also excluded from school/childcare until the fever has been gone for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication. School and childcare exclusion are mandated by the Texas Administrative Code, [Rule 97.7](http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac%24ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=25&pt=1&ch=97&rl=7) and [Rule 746.3603](http://info.sos.state.tx.us/pls/pub/readtac%24ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=19&ch=746&rl=3603).

Health Authority Signature Block