



**Facsimile Cover Sheet**  
**Wharangi Nama Waea**

Date/Te Ra: **27 February 2014**

<b>To/Kia:</b> General Practitioners, Practice Nurses, Pharmacists, After-hours Centers and Emergency Departments in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa region	<b>From/Na:</b>
<b>Name of Agency/Wahi Mahi:</b>	<b>Fax Number/Nama Waea:</b>

## **Public Health Alert**

### **Hepatitis A - Wainuiomata and Lower Hutt**

I would be grateful if you could distribute the following information to relevant staff in your organisation.

If you would also like to receive this by email for ease of distribution, storage and retrieval please advise RPH of your email on [rph@huttvalleydhb.org.nz](mailto:rph@huttvalleydhb.org.nz).

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Annette Nesdale'.

Dr Annette Nesdale

Medical Officer of Health

Regional Public Health

## Public Health Alert



**Date:** 27 February 2014

**To:** General Practitioners, Practice Nurses, Pharmacists, After-hours Centres,  
Emergency Departments in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa region

**From:** Dr Annette Nesdale

## Hepatitis A cases in Lower Hutt and Wainuiomata

### Current epidemiology

Regional Public Health (RPH) has been notified of 6 confirmed cases of hepatitis A in the last week. The ill people are from the Pacific community and are known to each other. The initial cases became ill after a trip to Samoa in December. Two are children under 5 years of age, 2 are school aged children and 2 are adults.

### Public health investigation and follow up of cases and contacts

All the cases are being advised about ways to prevent disease spread and we are identifying those who they have had close contact with. RPH is providing hepatitis A vaccine to these close household, extended family and Early Childcare Centre contacts to prevent further disease. If someone is already incubating the disease, the vaccine will not prevent them getting ill, but it is likely to lessen the illness and infectivity. Please advise RPH if a person we have vaccinated develops a hepatitis illness.

Family doctors will be notified of patients who have been vaccinated by RPH. We advise all people who have received a single dose of hepatitis A vaccine, that they need a second dose after 6 to 12 months for life-long protection. This is especially important if they travel home to the Pacific or elsewhere. We recommend people talk to their family doctor or practice nurse about getting the second dose of hepatitis A vaccine and what it will cost.

### Hepatitis A incubation period

The incubation period of hepatitis A ranges from 2 to 7 weeks but is usually about 30 days. Those unwell with hepatitis A are capable of spreading disease to others for two weeks prior to developing jaundice, and one week after developing jaundice. Prolonged viral excretion of several months can occur in infants and children.

### Clinical presentation

*In children*, the disease is usually mild and may present only with nausea/ vomiting, poor appetite, fever and tiredness. This makes it more difficult to determine the infectious period for infants/ children and increases the risk of spread of infection in households and Early Childcare Centres.

*In adults*, onset is usually abrupt, with fever, malaise, anorexia, nausea and abdominal discomfort, followed by jaundice within days. There is a spectrum of illness from mild, lasting 1-2 weeks to severely disabling, lasting several months. No chronic infection is known to occur.

### **Be alert for possible cases**

We ask that you have a high index of suspicion **for hepatitis A**, especially in the Pacific community in the Hutt Valley. Hepatitis A is easily spread within households and between children attending an Early Childcare Centre.

### **If you suspect a case of hepatitis A please:**

- **Request** Hepatitis A IgM serology and LFT's, mark the request "URGENT" and copy to "Medical Officer of Health" at Regional Public Health
- **Notify** suspected cases of hepatitis A during office hours to the RPH notifications line on 04 570 9267, or if it is after hours, notify the on-call Medical Officer of Health on 04 570 9007.
- **Ask** for the person's occupation or for children ask for the name of their school/Early Childcare Centre. If the person is a food handler, healthcare worker or works at or attends an Early Childcare Centre, please advise them to stay away from work/the centre until their illness has been diagnosed. If it is confirmed to be Hepatitis A then we will advise on when they can return to work/childcare.
- **Advise** the ill person about the importance of washing + drying their hands after going to the toilet
- **Advise** that ill people should have their own towel, face cloth and tooth brush and not share these items with others
- **Advise** those who are ill that they should NOT prepare food for others while they are ill, especially if the food is eaten raw.

### **For more information on;**

- Hepatitis A, see the Ministry of Health factsheet accessible at <https://www.healthed.govt.nz/system/files/resource-files/6740.pdf>
- Hepatitis A immunisation, please call the Immunisation Advisory Centre free on 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) or visit their website: [www.immune.org.nz](http://www.immune.org.nz)