

What You Need to Know about Hepatitis A

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Recently, news sources have reported an outbreak of Hepatitis A in several U.S. states this year. Among the states involved, Utah and California have seen the most activity, with Michigan, Kentucky, Arizona, and Colorado also reporting cases of the illness. Three cases have recently been confirmed in Port Chester, NY. Should you be concerned?

A viral illness affecting the liver, Hepatitis A can cause flu-like symptoms, including fatigue, fever, poor appetite, and abdominal pain. Symptoms usually appear two to four weeks after exposure. While generally mild, the virus can be serious if not addressed promptly, and in rare cases, may be fatal. No specific treatment exists, so symptom management – including rest, nausea relief, and avoidance of alcohol – are key. Most people recover from symptoms within a few weeks, and the liver typically heals within six months with no lasting damage. The disease is transmitted through ingestion of contaminated food and water or direct contact with an infectious person. What's tricky in terms of stopping an outbreak is that people are contagious before symptoms appear and before they realize they're sick. Fortunately, transmission can be prevented through proper hand-washing.

In 1994, Hepatitis A was added to the list of routine childhood immunizations, but people born before then may not have been vaccinated. While not a tremendous local concern at this point, those traveling to the areas where outbreaks have occurred should check their immunization records and consider getting the vaccine if they haven't previously done so.

RVNAhealth always has the Hepatitis A vaccine available at its Center for Exceptional Care, 27 Governor Street in Ridgefield. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 203-438-5555.



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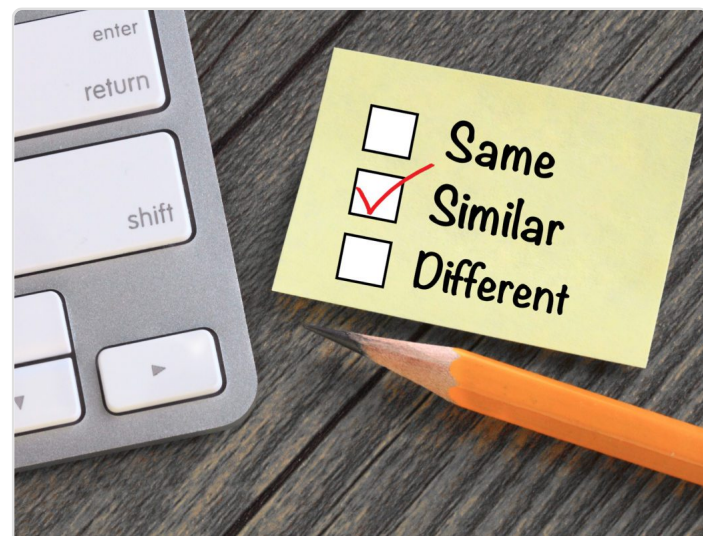


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