



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –
Cumberland County Public Health Department
Contact: Buck Wilson, Director
Telephone: 910-433-3700 or 910-703-1207
E-mail: BWilson@co.cumberland.nc.us

August 9, 2011

Health Department Update on Hepatitis A Immunizations

FAYETTEVILLE, NC – More than 250 Hepatitis A immunizations were administered today at the Cumberland County Public Health Department to individuals who may have been exposed to the disease at a local restaurant.

Employees and anyone who visited the Olive Garden at 234 North McPherson Church Road anytime on **July 26, 28, 29, 31 and Aug. 1, 2 and 8** may have been exposed to Hepatitis A through a restaurant employee and should contact the Health Department immediately to receive a free injection of Hepatitis A immune globulin or vaccine.

Please bring your shot record to the Health Department. Individuals current on Hepatitis A vaccine are considered protected from this virus.

A phone line is being updated hourly. Call 910-433-3824 for important information.

Only individuals from the seven dates listed above may obtain the immunization through the Cumberland County Public Health Department, 1235 Ramsey Street, at a walk-in clinic which will continue tomorrow and daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

People who were at the restaurant on any date other than those listed do not need to go to the Health Department on Wednesday because both immune globulin (also called gamma globulin) and Hepatitis A vaccine can only prevent infection with Hepatitis A virus if given **within 14 days of exposure**.

Although it is possible patrons who visited the restaurant prior to July 26 may have been exposed, the vaccine is not effective for them and it is important that they recognize the signs and symptoms of the disease and discuss them with their primary care physician.

-more-

The early signs and symptoms of Hepatitis A appear two to six weeks after exposure and commonly include mild fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tiredness, pain in the upper right side of the abdomen, dark urine, light color stools and jaundice (yellowness of eyes or skin).

The disease varies in severity, with mild cases lasting two weeks or less and more severe cases lasting 4-6 weeks or longer. Some individuals, especially children, may not develop jaundice or any symptom at all, and may have an illness so mild that it can go unnoticed. However, even mildly ill persons can still be highly infectious. Persons with illness suggestive of hepatitis should consult a physician even if symptoms are mild.

The age-appropriate dose of Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for healthy persons age 12 months to 40 years old. However, for anyone who cannot take the vaccine, there is a Hepatitis A immune globulin recommended for persons:

- Over the age of 40 years
- Children under the age of 12 months
- Immune-compromised persons who have been diagnosed with chronic liver disease or who have been advised to avoid the vaccine due to potential adverse reactions.

Health Department medical staff will assess persons at the clinic and give the appropriate immunization.

Hepatitis A virus is usually spread when a person ingests fecal matter – even in microscopic amounts – from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by feces or stool of an infected person. Persons are at increased risk of acquiring Hepatitis A when they have been in close and continuous contact with an infected individual, particularly in a household. Fecal matter can remain on the hands unless hands are washed often and thoroughly.

Careful handwashing is key to preventing spread of Hepatitis A and should include vigorous washing of hands with soap and running water for minimum of 20 seconds. All surfaces should be washed including the back of the hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails.

For more information see <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/A/index.htm>.

###