



**CITY OF CLEVELAND**  
Mayor Frank G. Jackson

**From: Office of the Mayor:**

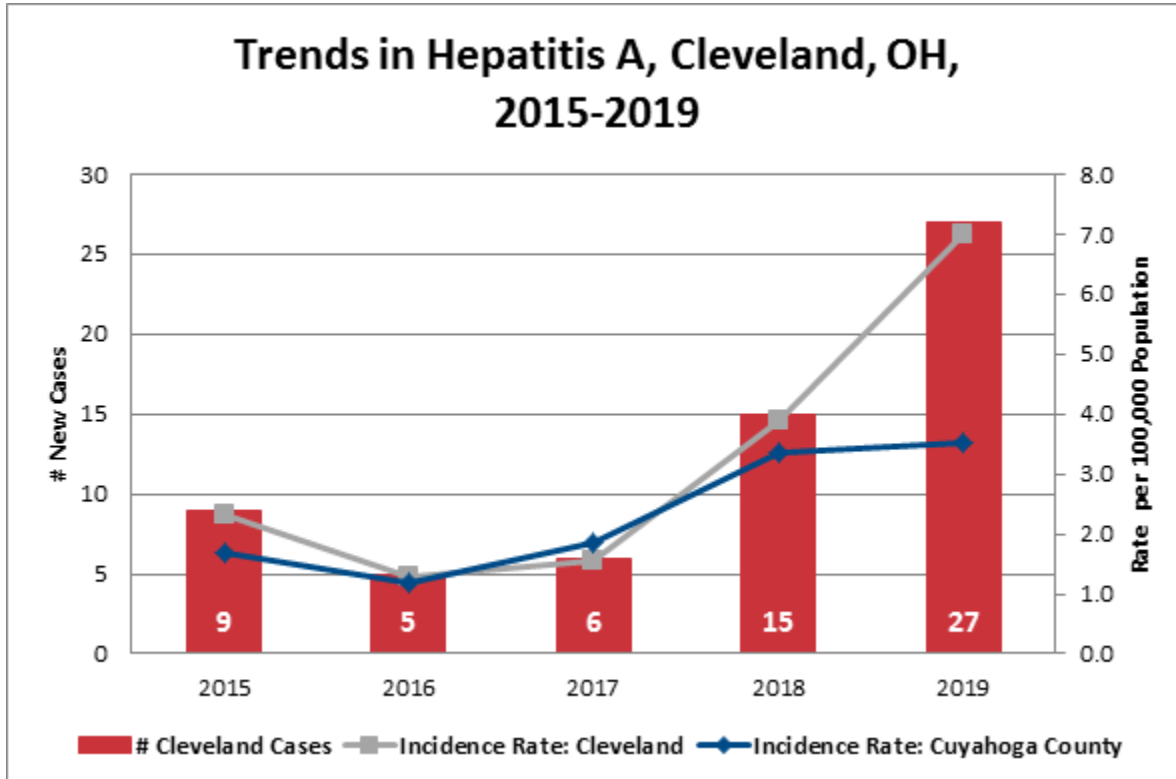
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**May 23, 2019**

## Hepatitis A Diagnoses Continues to Increase

**CLEVELAND** – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) declared a statewide outbreak of hepatitis A in early 2018, and thus far there have been 2,298 cases, 1,413 hospitalizations, and eight deaths (as of May 20, 2019). The Cleveland Department of Public Health is reporting 42 new cases of hepatitis A since January 2018. Of these cases, 20 (48%) have been linked to the outbreak so far (with more expected to be linked). In previous years the average is seven cases, however, in just the first five months of 2019 there has been a 350% increase (to 27 cases) of newly diagnosed cases of hepatitis A.



The hepatitis A virus is a contagious liver disease most commonly spread by the ingestion of food or water contaminated by feces or by oral contact with contaminated objects. Most infections result from contact with an infected member of their household or a sex partner. Hepatitis A **cannot** be spread through coughing or sneezing.

Hepatitis A infection can range from mild to serious, lasting a few weeks to several months. Anyone who is infected may spread the virus to others starting 1-2 weeks prior to symptoms appearing. Symptoms include fatigue, abdominal pain, nausea/vomiting, fever, yellow skin (jaundice), dark urine, pale stool and joint pain.

Those at higher risk for getting hepatitis A can include:

- Individuals who are homeless or use transient housing
- Individuals who use illicit drugs (this includes injection and non-injection drugs)
- Men who have sex with men, sex workers, and their clients
- Individuals who are incarcerated or have recently been in jail or prison
- People with underlying liver disease
- Individuals traveling to developing countries where hepatitis A is common

In response, the Cleveland Department of Public Health will be offering the hepatitis A vaccine at our health centers. The vaccine is available free of charge. Vaccination is strongly encouraged for at-risk individuals and we encourage anyone concerned about potential exposure to speak with their health care provider, pharmacist, or the health department as soon as possible.

The Cleveland Department of Public Health is also able to conduct community-based clinics at sites and facilities that serve those at highest risk of contracting hepatitis A. Contact 216-664-4354 for more information and to schedule for a shot.

Steps that you can take to limit your risk of hepatitis A infection and the potential infection of those close to you are:

- Getting vaccinated.
- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water.

For more information about hepatitis A, contact Adam Nation, 216-664-2889, [anation@cleveland.oh.us](mailto:anation@cleveland.oh.us)

### **About the City of Cleveland**

The City of Cleveland is committed to improving the quality of life its residents by strengthening neighborhoods, delivering superior services, embracing diversity and making Cleveland a desirable, safe city in which to live, work and play. For more information on the City of Cleveland, visit online at [www.city.cleveland.oh.us](http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us), Twitter at [@cityofcleveland](https://twitter.com/cityofcleveland) or Facebook at [www.facebook.com/cityofcleveland](https://www.facebook.com/cityofcleveland)