



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30329-4027

October 17, 2017

Wilma J. Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.
Public Health Officer
Director, Public Health Services
3851 Rosecrans Street, Mail Stop P-578
San Diego, CA 92110-3134

Dear Dr. Wooten:

In response to your letter and to address the questions and concerns regarding the potential for waterborne transmission of hepatitis A virus (HAV) during the current outbreak in San Diego, California, CDC staff has provided the County Epidemiology program with information and insight into the history of waterborne HAV in the United States and the futility of environmental sampling in outbreaks that are transmitted person-to-person.

There has not been a documented waterborne outbreak of HAV in the United States in well over 30 years, and the outbreaks that did occur in the past were related to untreated water sources located next to septic systems.¹⁻⁴ There is no indication that the current outbreak in San Diego has a water source; this would be unlikely as the water supply in the county is treated.

In regards to water in natural environments (i.e. rivers, lakes, oceans) that may be contaminated with human waste, CDC recommends following usual contamination mitigation practices in the form of restricting access or posting signage, as is done routinely through EPA standard monitoring of recreational waters for enterococci and *Escherichia coli*.

There is no evidence that either water or environmental sampling provides additional information for addressing person-to-person HAV transmission. Thus, investing in these activities could unnecessarily divert resources that are needed to contain the outbreak in proven and effective ways (vaccination, education, restrooms, and hand hygiene practices).

Based on current public health knowledge and accepted practices, there is no change CDC would recommend from the previous assistance given on this topic. CDC continues to recommend that at-risk populations be vaccinated, educated about the outbreak, and have access to clean restrooms and hand washing facilities.

Sincerely,

John W. Ward, M.D.
Director, Division of Viral Hepatitis
National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB

cc:

Rima Khabbaz, Director, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases; Acting Deputy Director for Infectious Diseases; Acting Director, Office of Infectious Diseases
Jonathan Mermin, Director, National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, Sexually Transmitted Disease, and Tuberculosis Prevention

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 2. De Serres G, Cromeans TL, Levesque B, et al. Molecular confirmation of hepatitis A virus from well water: epidemiology and public health implications. *J Infect Dis* 1999; **179**(1): 37-43.
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