Hepatitis A Outbreak Grows Among Gay and Bi Men in Europe

Men who have sex with men traveling to the region are advised to get vaccinated for hepatitis A virus.

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Diagnoses of hepatitis A virus (HAV) among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Western Europe have soared during 2017, with health officials sounding the alarm that men at risk should be vaccinated for the virus, aidsmap reports. Researchers believe the outbreaks have not yet peaked.

According to a European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) report, three main outbreaks of linked cases have encompassed nearly 1,500 cases, predominantly among MSM. Investigators are looking into an additional 2,660 cases as a part of the overall outbreak.

Ten nations in the region have reported increases in their hep A diagnoses compared with 2016.

France has seen nearly 800 of these diagnoses, while Spain has identified more than 1,800 cases among MSM or among men 18 to 45 years old who have not been exposed to contaminated food or water.

According to the ECDC, vaccination shortages notwithstanding, the following groups of men should be prioritized for hep A vaccinations: those living in areas with outbreaks; those traveling to such nations; those attending LGBT Pride festivals in the region; those at high risk of complications if they contract hep A, including those with hepatitis B or C viruses (HBV/HCV) and injection drug users.

Hepatitis A is transmitted through the “fecal-oral” route, that is, if contaminated feces come into contact with the mouth. Anal sex practices between men can facilitate such transmission. The virus may also spread via contaminated food or water.

To read the aidsmap article, click here.

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