

Benton-Franklin Health District
www.bfhd.wa.gov

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Benton-Franklin Health District Website
www.bfhd.wa.gov

Washington Department of Health
www.doh.wa.gov

Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov

Rev 9/2019

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FORMER BENTON COUNTY INMATE HAS HEPATITIS A

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 21, 2020

KENNEWICK — A former Benton County inmate has tested positive for hepatitis A. He was incarcerated in the Benton County jail earlier this month, before being transferred to a local hospital. Upon discharge from the hospital, he returned home to Grant County. Washington State is experiencing a hepatitis A outbreak in multiple counties; this is the second case linked to our area.

Hepatitis A is a very contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. It can be a mild or severe illness lasting from a few weeks to several months. Hepatitis A spreads easily when a person puts something (food, water, hands, or an object) into his or her mouth that has infected fecal particles on or in it. Even if the item looks clean, it can still have the virus on it that can spread to others.

The Health District is working closely with the Benton County Corrections Department to identify inmates and staff who were potentially exposed and offering vaccines to those people. The vaccine is effective if given soon after exposure as well as providing protection against future exposures.

Men who were held at the jail between February 11 and 15 are asked to call Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD) at 509-460-4200. Staff will review the dates of incarceration and immunization status. Vaccines will be available to those who may have been exposed and who are not immunized.

BFHD's environmental health staff are also consulting with the jail on post-exposure sanitation.

The best way to prevent hepatitis A is by getting vaccinated with two doses of the hepatitis A vaccine. Vaccination is recommended for all children starting at 1 year of age, for travelers to certain countries, and for people at high risk for infection with the virus.

You can also help prevent the spread of hepatitis A by washing your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, after changing a diaper, and before preparing food.

To learn more about the hepatitis A outbreak in Washington, go to <https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/DiseasesandVaccines/HepatitisADisease/HepatitisA2019>

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