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PRESS RELEASE

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PROTECTING AGAINST HEPATITIS A

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) -- Although Southern California has seen an outbreak in Hepatitis A cases in 2017, Santa Barbara County has not experienced an increase number of Hepatitis A cases and there are no cases linked to this outbreak locally. The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is taking steps to protect those at high risk and prevent the spread of the disease.

Since early 2017, San Diego County has identified 444 cases of Hepatitis A, including 16 deaths. A majority of the cases are in the homeless and illicit drug use populations. Outbreaks of Hepatitis A have since been identified in Santa Cruz County (69 cases) Los Angeles County (10 cases) and Orange County (1 case).

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months. Hepatitis A Virus is a vaccine preventable disease. Even one dose of the vaccine can prevent the spread of the disease and an outbreak.

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department has taken a number of proactive steps including:

- Sending information to local healthcare providers on steps they should take to vaccinate individuals at high risk, closely monitor their patient population and report any confirmed or suspected Hepatitis A infections to our department.
- Launching an aggressive vaccination campaign to ensure people experiencing homelessness and other at-risk individuals are vaccinated with the Hepatitis A vaccine.
- Offering Hepatitis A vaccinations as a collaboration with the Salvation Army in various homeless shelters on September 26.

All of us can protect ourselves from Hepatitis A virus by:

- Getting vaccinated through your primary health care provider.
- Washing your hands with soap and water before eating drinking or handling food.
- Buying food or drinks from food trucks or carts with permits from the health department.

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