

ISRAEL: Hepatitis A Outbreak Reported TA, Bat Yam

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February 12, 2013

Jerusalem Post (02.08.13)

The Israeli Health Ministry is reporting a significant outbreak of hepatitis A virus (HAV) infection in the country, with 69 recently reported cases in comparison with the previous years seven reported cases. According to the ministry, men comprise 66 percent of new diagnoses; 17 percent of the new cases are homeless persons or drug addicts (or both) in south Tel-Aviv and Bat Yam. The ministry is conducting further tests to determine whether all those infected share a viral strain. A protective vaccine for HAV is available and is given to all children ages 12 to 23 months and anyone more than one year of age who is travelling to a country with a high or intermediate prevalence of the virus. Health officials are urging that unvaccinated babies and teens up to the age of 17 receive the HAV vaccine for their protection; they also noted that the outbreak could be halted if intravenous drug users are vaccinated. Those usually affected by HAV include homosexuals; individuals who use street drugs; chronic liver-disease patients; hemophiliacs treated with clotting factor concentrates; individuals working with HAV-infected primates; scientists or technicians working with HAV in research laboratories; or individuals residing in Central or South America, Mexico, Asia (excluding Japan), Africa, and Eastern Europe.

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