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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

TO: Local Media Sources
FROM: Joel R. Strasz, Health Officer
DATE: November 7, 2017

RE: Rise In Hepatitis A Cases

As a result of an outbreak of Hepatitis A in Southeast Michigan, the Bay County Health Department is urging residents to get the Hepatitis A vaccine and practice proper hand washing techniques to prevent the spread of the virus. Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection and is contracted when a person ingests fecal matter from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by feces or stool from an infected person. It can range from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months.

There are currently no confirmed cases of Hepatitis A in Bay County related to the outbreak in Southeast Michigan. However, there is potential for the virus to spread across the state. **The best way to protect yourself form contracting the Hepatitis A virus is to get vaccinated** along with the following:

- Wash hands after using the restroom and before eating or preparing meals for yourself or others
- Use your own towels, toothbrushes, and eating utensils
- Do not have sex with someone who has Hepatitis A Virus infection
- Do not share food, drinks, drugs, or devices used for smoking such as cigarettes, e-cigs, etc. with other people
- If you think you may have hepatitis A, see your medical provider
- If you have hepatitis A, please cooperate with your local public health agency to help protect others

Symptoms of Hepatitis A can include: fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, clay-colored stools, joint pain or jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes) Symptoms will occur over a period of time and usually start appearing 4 weeks after exposure, but can occur as early as 2 weeks and as late as 7 weeks after exposure. If you begin experiencing any of these symptoms contact your health care provider.

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For more information on the Hepatitis A virus please go to the Communicable Disease section of the Bay County Health Department website at <http://www.baycounty-mi.gov/health/CommunicableDisease.aspx>. To schedule an appoint to get the Hepatitis A vaccine please call the immunizations department at 989-895-4009 option 2. .

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