

## **Hepatitis A**

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). HAV is transmitted person-to-person by the fecal-oral route. Persons most at risk include those traveling abroad to countries where the virus is common, sexual and household contacts of infected persons, drug users, and children living in states\* with high rates of infection during the period between 1987 and 1997. Children infected with HAV may often be asymptomatic. Infected adults often show a variety of symptoms including fever, anorexia, diarrhea, and jaundice.

During 2006, a total of eight confirmed cases of acute HAV were reported to the Maine CDC. This represents an overall case rate of 0.6 per 100,000 population. There was an even distribution of male and female cases. The median age of cases was 44 years, with a range of 29 to 62 years.

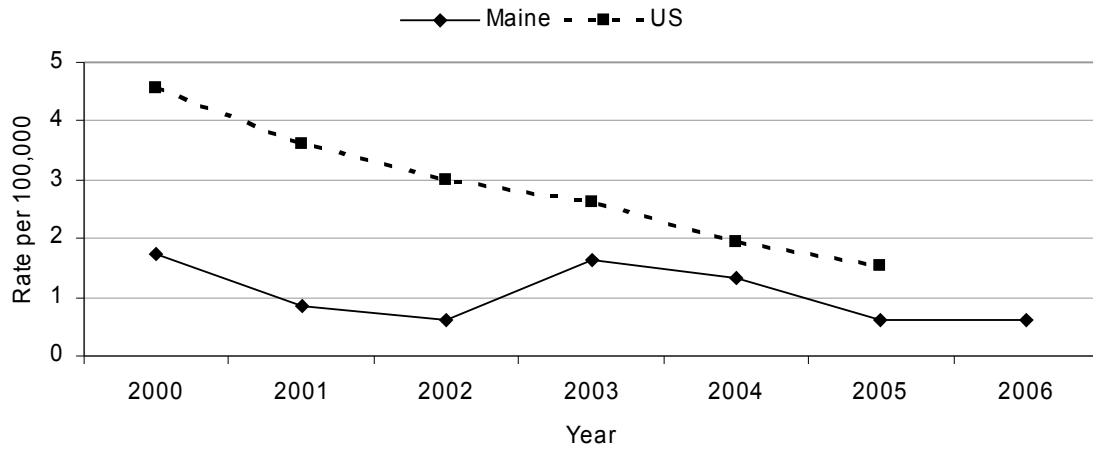
Reports of HAV were received from six of 16 counties: Androscoggin County (2), Aroostook County (1), Cumberland County (1), Lincoln County (1), Penobscot County (2), and York County (1).

The introduction of the hepatitis A vaccine in 1999 has played an important role in the substantial decrease in disease incidence across the country over the past few years. Not accounting for occasional outbreaks, it is expected that this reduction in HAV incidence would be sustained in line with improved vaccine coverage.

The hepatitis vaccine is widely available and is the best protection against infection. The vaccine is recommended for persons 12 months or older in age or who belong to one of the high-risk groups mentioned above. Short-term protection against hepatitis A is available from immune globulin, which can be given before and within 2 weeks after coming in contact with a person infected with acute HAV. Proper hand washing after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before preparing and eating food is strongly recommended.

\*States include Arizona, Alaska, Oregon, New Mexico, Utah, Washington, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Idaho, Nevada and California.

### Incidence of Acute Hepatitis A, Maine and United States, 2000-2006



### Acute Hepatitis A by Month, Maine, 2006

