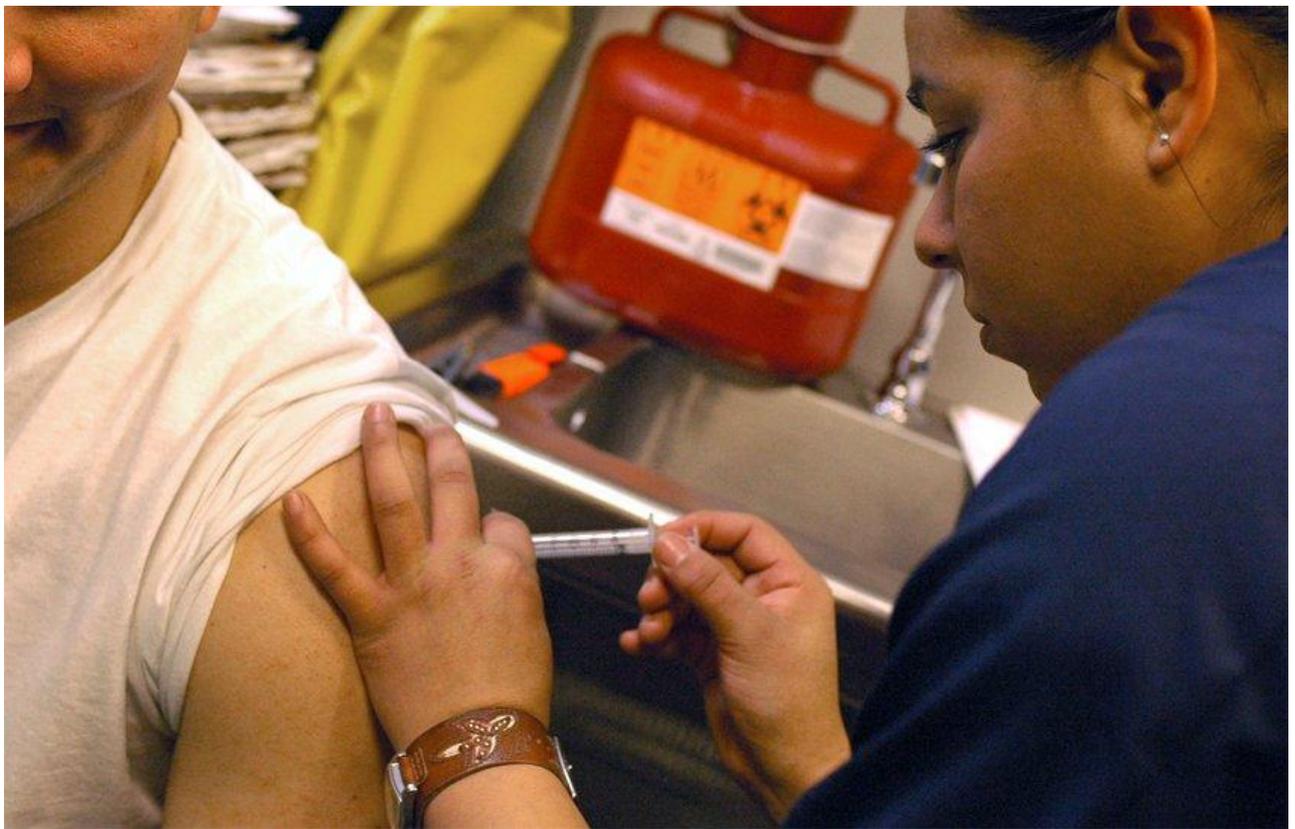


## Gay men warned to get vaccinated against Hepatitis A if they're heading to World Pride in Madrid

'The Spanish Government has asked those attending the World Pride event in Madrid to get protected but there are some vaccine shortages locally'



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**Hepatitis A infection can easily be prevented with a vaccine**

Public Health England has issued a stark warning to gay and bisexual men who are planning on attending World Pride in Madrid.

The health authority is advising them to be vaccinated against Hepatitis A before they go following a dramatic increase in incidents of the disease in recent months.

Gay and bisexual men can ask for the vaccine in the UK at their local Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic.

PHE say that all men who have sex with men should ask about the vaccine on their next visit to a clinic, but that anyone attending World Pride should think about booking an appointment in advance of going.

This year's World Pride runs from 23 June-2 July, with the main parade on 1 July.

'Hepatitis A is a highly infectious virus causing inflammation of the liver, with symptoms including vomiting, diarrhoea and a flu-like illness,' PHE said in a statement.

'While it can be transmitted through food or water contaminated with faeces, the recent cases among men who have sex with men (MSM) are believed to have been spread through oral or anal sex.'

Those most at risk are those who have multiple partners, while those who have visited Spain and other European countries are believed to be at greater risk.

## **'Hepatitis A among gay and bisexual men is significantly higher than usual'**

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunization at Public Health England, said:

'Hepatitis A among gay and bisexual men is significantly higher than usual, making it important to take extra care - especially if travelling to other countries. MSM are at highest risk and should ask about the vaccine the next time they visit a GUM clinic.'

'The Spanish Government has asked those attending the World Pride event in Madrid to get protected but there are some vaccine shortages locally. Therefore those intending to travel should ask at their GUM clinics before they leave.'

As GSN [reported earlier this month](#), sexual health and GUM clinics in the UK used to routinely offer hepatitis A vaccinations to gay and bisexual men. However, this routine service has been reduced due to financial cutbacks in recent years.

It's thought that the drop in Hepatitis A vaccinations may be contributing to the current increase in rates amongst gay and bi men in the UK. The numbers of men infected across Europe rose sharply in the first three months of 2017, and health officials are concerned that the summer pride season will send rates even higher.

The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has been tracking three different variations of Hepatitis A. They believe the spread may have started in Berlin, Germany, and Sitges, in Spain.

**Besides the Hepatitis A vaccine, PHE recommends the following:**

- Wash your hands after sex (ideally buttocks, groin and penis too)
- Use protection for fingering, rimming and fisting
- Change condoms between anal and oral sex
- Avoid sharing sex toys

Cary James, Head of Health Improvement at Terrence Higgins Trust, said:

'We're concerned about the outbreak of hepatitis A, a virus which affects the liver. Gay and bisexual men are particularly affected so we would urge them to follow PHE's advice around vaccination, be aware of the symptoms and follow the prevention advice.'

'By following these easy steps, you will stay protected and can enjoy a safe, healthy and happy Pride season.'

Besides GUM clinics, Hepatitis A vaccinations are available privately and through some chemists.

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by [David Hudson](#)

<https://www.gaystarnews.com/article/gay-hepatitis-world-pride-madrid/>