

# 3.4 Hepatitis A

## Summary

Number of cases, 2009: 52  
Crude notification rate, 2009: 1.2/100,000 population  
Number of cases, 2008: 42

Hepatitis A virus causes an acute, usually self-limiting disease of the liver. It is primarily transmitted from person to person via the faecal-oral route and is associated with poor hygiene and sanitation. Common source outbreaks due to contaminated food or water may also occur.

The incidence of hepatitis A in Ireland has been low in recent years and remained low in 2009, with 52 cases notified. This corresponds to a crude notification rate of 1.2/100,000 population and represents a 24% increase compared to 2008, when 42 cases were notified (figure 1). Case classification was reported for all cases. Fifty one cases were laboratory confirmed and one was classified as a possible case.

Fifty two percent of cases were male (n=27) and forty eight percent were female (n=25). All age groups were affected (figure 2).

Eight cases were linked to travel outside of Ireland, seventeen cases were contacts of cases infected outside of Ireland and one case had travelled outside of Ireland within the incubation period of the disease but could also have been infected in Ireland.

Of the remaining cases, eight were infected in Ireland and information on country of infection was not available for eighteen.

Two hepatitis A outbreaks were reported in 2009 and both of them occurred in the HSE-E. The largest outbreak involved mainly transmission in a school and included thirteen children and four young adults. The index case was a young child who was infected in India. The remaining cases were infected in Ireland through person to person contact within the school. Some later secondary transmissions occurred within families and the wider community. The outbreak lasted from May to December with low level spread. A high level of awareness of good hand hygiene practices during

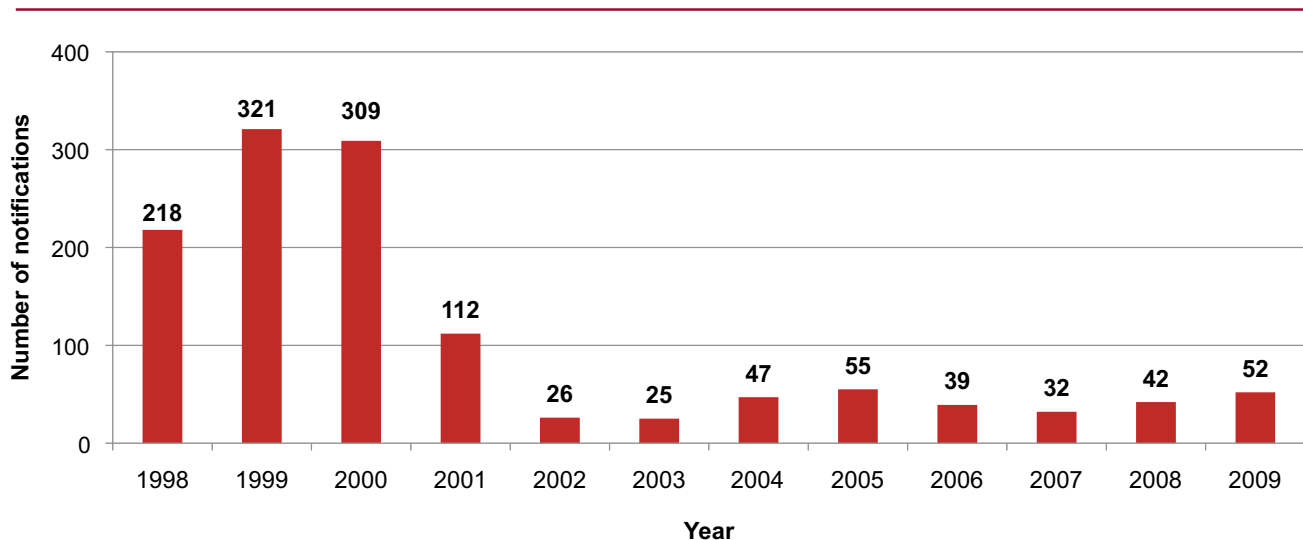


Figure 1. Number of hepatitis A notifications, 1998-2009

the height of the (H1N1) 2009 pandemic may have contributed to the limited level of spread. The second outbreak involved two adults who shared a house. Country of infection was uncertain for the index case but may have occurred in Spain.

There were no fatalities recorded in any of the hepatitis A cases in 2009.

The figures presented in this summary are based on data extracted from the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) System on 23rd June 2010. These figures may differ from those published previously due to ongoing updating of notification data on CIDR.

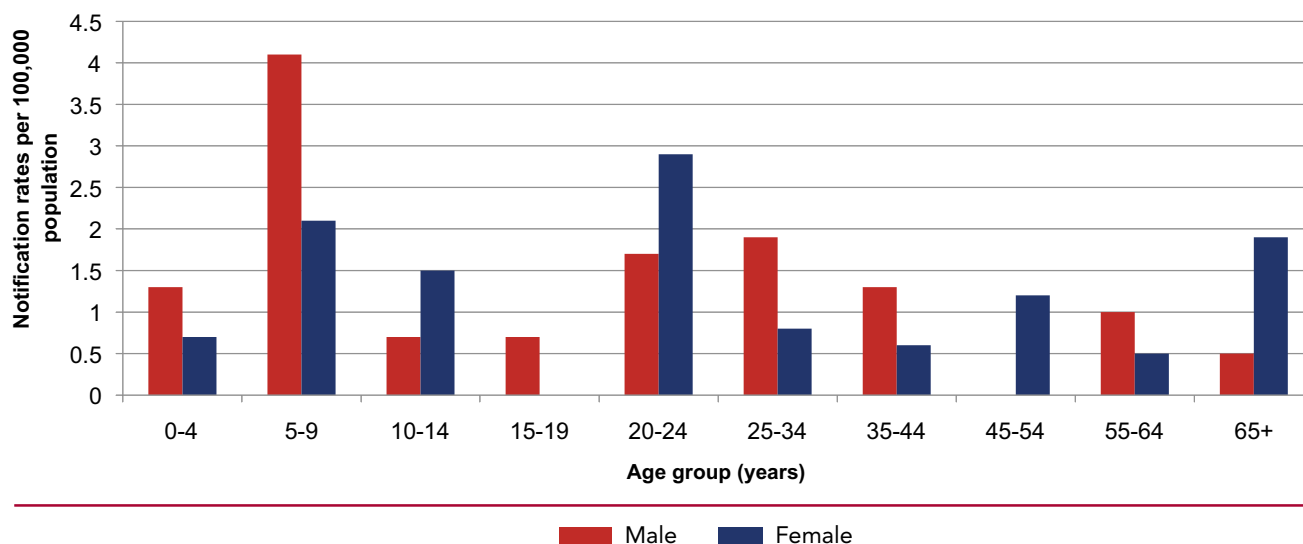


Figure 2. Age and sex-specific notification rates/100,000 population for hepatitis A, 2009