

Frequently Asked Questions – Hepatitis A Outbreak

May 31, 2013

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is collaborating with public health officials in several states and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to investigate a multistate outbreak of Hepatitis A illnesses.

What product is implicated in the outbreak?

The product associated with the outbreak is Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Berry Blend purchased at Costco. (See the photo below.)



What if I ate the berries more than 14 days ago? Will getting hepatitis A vaccination now prevent me from becoming ill?

There is no evidence that receiving the hepatitis A vaccine more than 14 days after the last time you consumed the product will prevent illness if you became infected. If you or someone you know ate the product more than 14 days ago, be aware of the symptoms that may indicate you have hepatitis A. We do not believe that everyone who ate the product will become ill, but the signs and symptoms are:

- fever
- loss of energy
- loss of appetite
- nausea
- abdominal discomfort
- dark urine or clay-colored stools
- vomiting and
- jaundice (skin and whites of the eyes turning yellow).

What if I ate frozen berries packaged and sold by a different company?

At this time, the only product of concern is the Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Berry Blend purchased at Costco. There is no indication that other products are affected.

What if I ate the berries and I am pregnant?

If you are pregnant and ate the berries in the last 14 days, contact your health care provider to ask about getting hepatitis A vaccine or immunoglobulin to prevent illness. If you ate the berries more than 14 days ago, let your health care provider know and be aware of the signs and symptoms of hepatitis A. Follow-up with your health care provider immediately if you develop signs and symptoms of illness (see above).

What if I fed the berries to my infant?

If you fed the berries whole or in a smoothie or in any other manner to an infant (less than 12 months of age) in the last 14 days, contact the infant's health care provider to ask about getting hepatitis A vaccine for the infant. Hepatitis A vaccine is typically given to children starting at 12 months of age, but it can be given safely to infants as young as 6 months of age. If an infant 6 months of age or older who has eaten the berries in the last 14 days can get the vaccine, it may prevent the infant from becoming ill. If the infant ate the berries more than 14 days ago, be aware of the signs and symptoms of hepatitis A. Follow-up with your infant's health care provider immediately if your infant develops signs and symptoms of illness (see above).

For infants less than 6 months of age, immunoglobulin may be given to prevent illness if it is given within 14 days of last consuming the berries.

What if I ate mixed berries or berry smoothies from a local restaurant?

Check with the establishment and find out if they use the Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Berry Blend purchased at Costco in their recipes. If so, and you have eaten berries or foods containing the product in the last 14 days, contact your health care provider about getting the hepatitis A vaccine to prevent illness. If it has been more than 14 days, be aware of the signs and symptoms of hepatitis A.

I ate this product in the last 14 days. Where can I get hepatitis A vaccine?

Contact your health care provider to find out if he/she has hepatitis A vaccine. Hepatitis A vaccine is also available at the Southern Nevada Health District's Immunization Clinics, call 759-0850, Monday-Friday for clinic locations and hours of operations or visit our website at www.SNHD.info. After hours call the health district's Office of Epidemiology at 759-1300.

I think I have had one dose of the vaccine. Is that enough?

There are different hepatitis A manufacturers and formulations. It is usually given in a series of 2 or 3 injections over the course of 6 months. If you are certain that you have had one dose of hepatitis A vaccine in the past, it is highly likely that you are already protected. However, you should still complete

the series. Check with your healthcare provider or clinic to determine if and when you need additional doses.

I have the product in my freezer. What should I do with it?

If you have the product, you should discard it in a manner that prevents others from eating it.

I have this product in my freezer, but they are berries that I bought a long time ago. Are they safe to eat?

At this time it is not known how long or what percentage of this product has been contaminated with hepatitis A. Regardless of when you purchased the product, even if it was 2 years ago, we recommend that you discard it in the trash.

I bought the product, but have not eaten or opened the bag. Can I get sick from touching the bag?

No, touching or handling the bag will not make you sick. If you open the bag and get the berries on your hands, you should wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water and discard the product in a manner that prevents others from eating them.

I ate the product in the past, I have the signs and symptoms of hepatitis, but I don't have a health care provider. What should I do?

If you think you have hepatitis A but don't have a healthcare provider, go to your local urgent care facility or emergency room for evaluation. People with hepatitis A can become quite ill and may require hospitalization.

I ate the Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Berry Blend from Costco. Do my family members or loved ones need to be concerned?

If you ate the product, but your family members or loved ones did not, then they will not be at risk of infection. However, if you develop hepatitis A, then your family members, sex partners, or very close contacts will need to get hepatitis A vaccine if they have not received it in the past. People who have had hepatitis A infection in the past are immune for life and will not need to get vaccine.

How do I know if I've been immunized for hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A has been mandated for entry into Clark County public and private schools since 2003 so many children and young adults are already immunized. Additionally, any person who obtained a health card between Nov. 15, 1999, through Dec. 2012 would have received at least one dose of vaccine.