



DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Promoting and protecting health, well-being, self-sufficiency, and safety of all in Marin County.

**PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY**



November 16, 2016

**Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) Linked to Frozen Strawberries**

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DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues:

Matthew Willis, MD, MPH  
PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

This advisory provides information about a multistate outbreak of foodborne hepatitis A linked to frozen strawberries.

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DEPUTY PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

**Current Situation**

On October 25, 2016, after receiving an import alert from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the International Company for Agricultural Production and Processing (ICAPP) issued a recall of frozen strawberries and frozen strawberry products that it has imported into the United States since January 1, 2016.

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San Rafael, CA 94901  
415 473 4163 T  
415 473 2326 F  
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[www.marincounty.org/hhs](http://www.marincounty.org/hhs)

**Actions requested of providers**

- Be alert for suspect cases of hepatitis A, especially in patients with a history of consuming recalled strawberries. Clinical jaundice may be a late sign or one that never develops, particularly in children.
- Provide post-exposure prophylaxis to susceptible persons who consumed contaminated product within 14 days.
- Test (IgM anti-HAV antibody) and immediately report suspected cases of hepatitis A to Marin HHS Communicable Disease and Prevention Control (CDPC) unit.
  - Enroll in CalREDIE Provider Portal. CalREDIE Provider Portal is a web-based confidential morbidity reporting system.

**Background**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), FDA and several states are investigating a multistate outbreak of foodborne hepatitis A. Frozen strawberries from Egypt are the likely source of the outbreak. There are no cases of hepatitis A associated with this outbreak in Marin County. But, from January 2016 through October 2016, the implicated strawberries were distributed to more than 20 institutions, food service operations, and independent restaurants countywide.

**Clinical Presentation**

Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease that results from HAV infection. HAV is transmitted via the fecal-oral route (i.e., person ingests the virus from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by feces from an infected person).

Hepatitis A can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months. Symptoms of hepatitis A appear between 15 and 50 days (generally about 28 days) after exposure. Hepatitis A symptoms include fever, headache, malaise, nausea, anorexia, abdominal pain, vomiting, and diarrhea. Dark urine, light-colored stool, and jaundice may follow. Young children (under age 6) are often asymptomatic or have mild symptoms.

### **Laboratory Testing**

Clinical or epidemiologic features do not differentiate HAV from other types of viral hepatitis. Laboratory findings in persons who are symptomatic show marked elevation in serum transaminase, total and direct bilirubin, and alkaline phosphatase levels.

Diagnosis requires a positive test for antibody to HAV (IgM anti-HAV antibody) in serum, detectable from 2 weeks before the onset of symptoms to approximately six months afterward.

### **Treatment**

Only supportive treatment is available for the routine case of hepatitis A. Bed rest is usually advised, and patients should not return to work or school until fever and jaundice have subsided. Age-appropriate treatment for nausea and diarrhea should be provided. Patients should avoid alcohol, but may eat a regular diet as tolerated.

### **Infection Prevention and Control**

#### *Hepatitis A Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)*

Patients who have consumed recalled strawberries in the last 14 days and who have not previously received hepatitis A vaccine should receive:

- One dose of vaccine to persons 1 to 40 years of age
- One dose of immune globulin (IG) for children under one year of age
- One dose of IG for adults age 40 or older (vaccine can be given at the same time as IG or instead of IG if it is not available)

#### *Hepatitis A Vaccine*

Hepatitis A vaccine is given as a two-dose series and recommended for:

- All persons who wish to be protected;
- All children beginning at 12 months of age;
- Persons traveling to endemic areas; and,
- Persons who will be living with or providing care for internationally adopted children.

#### *Prevention*

Prophylaxis of vulnerable populations and children through active or passive immunization is the most important prevention practice. Heating foods to 185°F (85°C) for one minute, use of a 1:100 solution of household bleach, hand washing,

and avoiding contact with uncooked foods, are all techniques that may reasonably decrease the likelihood of hepatitis A transmission.

### **Reporting**

HAV is a reportable disease under the California Code of Regulations, Title 17, Section 2505 due to its public health importance. Clinicians must report suspect Hepatitis A cases, and laboratories must report positive HAV lab results, to Marin HHS CDPC within one working day by fax (415 473 6002) or phone (415 473 4163). Clinicians should complete Confidential Morbidity Form (CMR) online through the [Provider Portal](#).

### **Additional Information**

CDC. [2016 - Multistate outbreak of hepatitis A linked to frozen strawberries](#)

California Department of Public Health (CDPH). [Hepatitis A](#)

Sincerely,

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