



DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
JUNE 4, 2013

**HEPATITIS A & TOWNSEND FARMS ORGANIC
ANTIOXIDANT BLEND FROZEN BERRIES**

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What is the situation? Some people across the country including California, have gotten sick with hepatitis A after eating Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend frozen berries (pictured above) – a mixture of cherries, blueberries, pomegranate, red raspberries, and strawberries – purchased from Costco markets since the end of February, 2013. The Novato Costco store sold approximately 3,148 bags of this product during the interval of concern, and has taken it off store shelves and notified customers who purchased this product.

How do we know that the berries are the problem? Most of the people who got sick reported eating this brand of frozen berries after buying it at Costco. This is strong evidence that the product may be the source of infection. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) is in the process of testing the product for hepatitis A virus to confirm.

What should I do? If you bought the product, throw it away.

What if I ate the berries? The risk of getting hepatitis A from eating these berries is low. If you are already immune to Hepatitis A, then you are protected. If you are not immune to Hepatitis A, then you may need vaccine to protect you.

Am I immune to hepatitis A? You are immune if you had hepatitis A disease in the past, or received hepatitis A vaccine. Check your vaccination records. Since the late 1990's, hepatitis A vaccine has been routinely given to children at age 12 months and 18-24 months as part of their regular shots, so most children are already protected unless they missed their shots or their parents refused to have them vaccinated. Also, if you have ever traveling internationally to the developing world, you may have been offered hepatitis A vaccine.

What if I am not immune to hepatitis A? If you are not immune, and you ate Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend frozen berries, then the hepatitis A vaccine can protect you as long as you get vaccinated within 14 days of eating the product. Some people may be recommended by their healthcare provider to get Immune Globulin rather than Hepatitis A vaccine. They are both effective.

Where can I get vaccinated for hepatitis A in Marin County? Hepatitis A vaccine is widely available. Check first with your regular medical provider. If you don't have a regular provider, or if your provider does not offer vaccine, check your local pharmacy. If you are uninsured and not immune to hepatitis A and ate Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend frozen berries within 14 days, call Marin County Immunization Clinic at (415) 473-4400.

What if I'm not immune and it's been more than 14 days since I ate the berries? It would not be helpful to get the hepatitis A vaccine at this point. But your risk of getting hepatitis A is low. You should monitor for development of illness and contact a doctor immediately if you become ill.

What are the signs of hepatitis A? Hepatitis A illness would start between 2 and 6 weeks after eating contaminated product. Common symptoms are mild fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, pain in the upper right side of the belly, dark urine, or jaundice (yellow eyes or skin). Hepatitis A disease severity ranges from very mild and lasting only about 2 weeks, to very severe lasting several months and requiring hospitalization. If you have any symptoms, even mild symptoms, you should contact your doctor. For more information on hepatitis A:

www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/CDCHEpAGeneralFactSheet.pdf

If I get symptoms of hepatitis A, can I infect others? Yes! Hepatitis A virus is spread from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by feces (stool, poop) from an infected person. It spreads:

- When an infected person does not wash hands thoroughly after using the bathroom
- A caregiver does not wash hands thoroughly after cleaning up stool (poop) of an infected person
- An infected person prepares or handles food or drink for others
- The food or water supply becomes contaminated
- Through close or sexual contact with an infected person.

If you work in food service, health care, or child care, you should not go to work if you have symptoms of hepatitis A.

Contact your doctor and the Marin County Public Health Communicable Disease and Prevention Unit at (415) 473-3038 or (415) 473-7805.