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PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: Medical Providers, Clinicians, Hospitalists, Health Care Facilities, Physician Practices, Corrections and Veteran Agencies, School Health Care, Emergency Services

From: Dr. Siiri Bennett, State Epidemiologist

Subject: Acute Hepatitis A Case in a Food Service Worker in Eastport, Maine

Date / Time: Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 5:02PM

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Priority: **High**

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ACUTE HEPATITIS A CASE IN A FOOD SERVICE WORKER IN EASTPORT, MAINE

The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) has identified a case of acute hepatitis A virus infection in an Eastport, Maine, food service worker. The individual handled food in the deli at the R&M IGA at 88 Washington Street in Eastport, Maine, while infectious on the following dates in 2021: May 3-6, May 8, May 10-13, May 15, and May 18-20. Deli food items purchased on May 3-22 should be discarded or cooked thoroughly.

Epidemiological assessment of the employee's illness determined that patrons of the establishment may be at risk for hepatitis A infection. Maine CDC recommends that anyone who ate food prepared in the R&M IGA deli from May 13-22, 2021, receive hepatitis A vaccine within 14 days of their potential exposure. There is a 14-day window during which prophylaxis is effective after exposure.

Anyone who ate food prepared at or who worked at this establishment from May 3-12, 2021, is outside the window for which prophylaxis is recommended. Those individuals are advised to watch for symptoms and seek medical attention should they develop symptoms (see below). Health care providers are encouraged to remain vigilant for hepatitis A infection in persons with consistent symptoms and should ask individuals with such symptoms about consumption of prepared food from this establishment or who worked at this establishment during this period.

Background

Hepatitis A virus is transmitted by the fecal-oral route, typically through consumption of contaminated food or water. Persons may exhibit symptoms 15-50 days after exposure to the virus. A person is considered infectious approximately two weeks prior to symptom onset until one week after onset of symptoms.

Exposed persons can receive post-exposure prophylaxis with hepatitis A vaccine up to 14 days from exposure. Immunocompromised individuals or children under 12 months old should consult their health care providers about receiving hepatitis A immune globulin (IG).

Recommendations

Health care providers should consider testing for hepatitis A if patients present with any of the following symptoms: Fever, jaundice, nausea, clay colored stool, dark urine, malaise, abdominal discomfort, anorexia, or vomiting.

Testing should include an acute hepatitis panel (specifically including hepatitis A IgM) and liver enzymes. Health care providers should review their patients' vaccine records and offer hepatitis A vaccine to those who are eligible.

The hepatitis A virus can survive outside the body for months. Heating foods and liquids to temperatures of 185°F (85°C) for at least 1 minute can kill the virus. Exposure to freezing temperatures does not kill the virus.

Reporting

All cases of suspected and confirmed hepatitis A infection should be reported by phone to the 24/7 disease reporting and consultation line at 1-800-821-5821.

For More Information

- Maine CDC Hepatitis website <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/hepatitis>
- US CDC Hepatitis A website <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HA/V/index.htm>
- ACIP Hepatitis A vaccine recommendations: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/hepa.html>