

April 19, 2016

Attention: Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Hospitals – Emergency Rooms/Infection Control /Occupational Health, Walk-In Clinics, Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Day Cares, Pharmacies

RE: NATIONAL/PROVINCIAL OUTBREAK INVESTIGATION OF HEPATITIS A CASES

The Public Health Agency of Canada is collaborating with Federal and Provincial Public Health Partners to investigate an outbreak of *Hepatitis A* infections in three provinces linked to the frozen fruit product: Nature's Touch Organic Berry Cherry Blend sold exclusively at COSTCO locations across Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. For the most current information on recalled products, please access the CFIA website: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/about-the-cfia/newsroom/food-recall-warnings/complete-listing/2016-04-15/eng/1460746426915/1460746429622>.

No cases of *Hepatitis A* linked to this investigation have been reported to date among residents of Haliburton and Northumberland Counties and the City of Kawartha Lakes. As of April 19, 2016, there are ten (10) cases of Hep A confirmed in Ontario associated with this outbreak. If you have patients who report having consumed the recalled product, vaccination can prevent the onset of symptoms if given within two weeks of exposure. **Publicly-funded Hepatitis A vaccine can be ordered by health care providers for this recall through the Vaccine Preventable Disease (VPD) team through our regular vaccine order form.** In addition, Costco has contacted all of its customers who purchased the recalled product via automated phone calls. Costco is offering Hepatitis A vaccine to customers who have eaten the product in the last 14 days in order to decrease the risk of Hepatitis A.

POST EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP)

If the product was consumed within the last 14 days PEP is recommended as follows:

Anyone 1 year of age and over should be offered Hepatitis A vaccine as soon as possible (unless contraindicated or fully immunized in the past. It is recommended that monovalent vaccine be used as it has a more robust immune response required for PEP efficacy.

Hepatitis A vaccine is not authorized for children less than 1 year of age. Options for this age group include:

- Off label use of Hepatitis A vaccine from 6 months to 1 year of age
- Immune globulin, particularly if they attend a child care centre
- No intervention except careful attention to hygiene when diapering etc. to prevent fecal oral spread

Individuals with a contraindication to Hepatitis A vaccine (e.g., allergic reaction to Hepatitis A vaccine), should be referred to their primary care provider for assessment regarding immune globulin.

For PREGNANT WOMEN, the vaccine has not been studied in clinical trials, but because the vaccine is prepared from inactivated viruses, no risk to the developing fetus is anticipated. Given that there have been Hepatitis A cases associated with the food recall, the benefits likely outweigh the risks and can be recommended to them.

Individuals with CHRONIC LIVER DISEASE should be: Offered Hepatitis A vaccine if within two weeks of last exposure (unless contraindicated or fully immunized in the past); Serum immune globulin should be considered in addition to the vaccine within three weeks of last exposure for those who have more severe chronic liver disease to ensure more protection. **Note that immune globulin can only be obtained and administered in Hospitals, but does not need to be provided at the same time as the vaccine.** Hospitals generally do not stock supply but may be able to obtain it as quickly as a few hours. Therefore, it would be recommended that the health care provider call a CDC Nurse at The Health Unit, to coordinate with local emergency departments to obtain immune globulin.

HEPATITIS A INFECTION

Infection is usually asymptomatic in children. Adults are typically symptomatic ranging from mild flu-like illness to fever, malaise, anorexia, nausea and abdominal pain followed by jaundice. Dark urine and light-coloured stools, as well as pruritis may occur. The incubation period ranges from 15 to 50 days with an average of 28 to 30 days.

Please report all suspect cases of Hepatitis A to The Health Unit. Should you suspect Hepatitis A among one of your patients, please emphasize:

- proper hand hygiene practices (e.g. after using the bathroom) in household settings.
- limiting food handling activities and the sharing of common food items with household and close contacts for the duration of the infectious period.
- Exclude cases such as food handler, child care staff and attendees and health care workers from high risk settings for 14 days after onset of symptoms, or 7 days after onset of jaundice, whichever comes earlier.

LABORATORY TESTING

Serology tests indicating IgM anti-HAV antibodies confirms recent infection. Antibodies are generally detectable in serum 5-10 days after infection and usually decrease to undetectable levels within 6 months after onset of infection. In rare cases, they may persist for longer. Detection of IgG antibodies signals recovery from acute Hepatitis A infection. When IgG antibodies are detected alone they indicate some level of immunity either from past infection or previous immunization. “Total Hepatitis A virus antibody” (total IgM and IgG antibody) is not a confirmatory test for acute HAV infection but is used as an initial screening test in some laboratories.

Further details available at:

http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/LaboratoryServices/Pages/Hepatitis_A_Diagnostic_Serology.aspx

Should you have any questions, please contact The Health Unit and ask to speak with a nurse in the Communicable Disease Control, Epidemiology and Evaluation Department.

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