**Hepatitis A and Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend Frozen Berries**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What’s happening?** As of June 4, 2013, 49 people in 7 states, including California, have gotten sick with hepatitis A after eating Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend frozen berries – a mixture of cherries, blueberries, pomegranate, red raspberries, and strawberries – purchased from Costco markets. Costco has taken the product off its store shelves. The product may also be sold at other stores. The investigation is still continuing.

**How do we know that the berries are the problem?** The majority of the people who got sick and have been interviewed reported eating this brand of frozen berries after buying it at Costco. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) is in the process of testing the product for hepatitis A virus to confirm the linkage.

**What should I do?** Check your freezer. If you bought the product, throw it away. Do not eat it.

**What if I ate the berries?** 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, diagnosed by a doctor or laboratory test, or received two doses of hepatitis A vaccine. Check your vaccination records. Since the late 1990’s, hepatitis A vaccine has been routinely given to children at age 12 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 visited a travel medicine clinic before traveling internationally to the developing world, you probably were offered hepatitis A vaccine. If you received 2 doses of hepatitis A vaccine in the past, you do not need a booster shot, you have long-term protection.

**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. For more information on Hepatitis A vaccine: [http://www.immunize.org/vis/hepatitis-a.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/vis/hepatitis-a.pdf)

**Where can I get vaccinated for hepatitis A in Alameda 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, use the vaccine finder to locate a local provider: [http://www.vaccines.gov/getting/where/index.html](http://www.vaccines.gov/getting/where/index.html).
What if I’m not immune and it’s been more than 14 days since I ate the berries? Getting the hepatitis A vaccine will not protect you from getting sick from eating contaminated berries. You should monitor for development of illness and contact a doctor immediately if you become ill. You should also ask your doctor if you should get the hepatitis A vaccine to protect you from possible future exposures.

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 ranges in severity, 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: 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, drinks or medications you take by mouth, that have been contaminated by feces (stool, poop) from an infected person. It spreads:

- When an infected person does not wash hands thoroughly after using the bathroom.
- If a caregiver does not wash hands thoroughly after cleaning up stool (poop) of an infected person.
- If an infected person prepares or handles food or drink for others.
- If the food or water supply becomes contaminated.
- Through close or sexual contact with an infected person.
- The best way to prevent the spread of hepatitis A after you have become ill is to wash your hands well every time you use the bathroom. Use warm water and soap; wash the front and backs of your hands, in between the fingers, under the fingernails, and up to the wrist, soaping up well. After 30 seconds (sing 3 verses of “Happy Birthday to Me” or “Row, row, row your boat” – that equals 30 seconds). Rinse! Clean!

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 Alameda County Department of Public Health Communicable Disease Control Unit at (510) 267-3250.