



**ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention
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HEALTH ADVISORY

June 7, 2013

Hepatitis A: Multistate Outbreak Linked to Frozen Berry Product and Alameda County Pharmacy Exposure

SITUATION

As of June 7, 2013, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports 79 people from 8 states with hepatitis A virus (HAV) infections that may be linked to consumption of Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend frozen berry and pomegranate mix widely distributed in Costco stores. As of June 7, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) reports 33 California residents from 15 local health jurisdictions (including 1 Alameda County case) are part of this outbreak. Costco has removed the product from their stores and is notifying customers who bought the product. The manufacturer has recalled the product.

In Alameda County, a case of HAV infection was identified in an employee of Target store pharmacies in San Leandro and in Hayward on Whipple Road. Target Pharmacy has followed Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) recommendations to contact customers who received prescriptions filled by the employee during the infectious period and to exchange the medications that were received with a fresh supply.

Several hundred people in Alameda County may have been exposed through the potentially contaminated berry product or medications.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF CLINICIANS

1. **REPORT** suspected and confirmed cases of acute hepatitis A within 1 working day of diagnosis. Call Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) Acute Communicable Disease (ACD) Unit at (510) 267-3250 Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 5:00pm or fax a Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) form (<http://www.acphd.org/media/127468/cdph110a.pdf>) to (510)268-2111.
2. **VACCINATE** with hepatitis A vaccine and/or **PROVIDE** immune globulin as post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for non-immune persons who meet hepatitis A exposure criteria described below, within 14 days of last exposure. Costco and Target have offered to reimburse their customers for hepatitis A vaccination. If you do not administer HAV vaccine, give patients a prescription so that insurance will cover the service.
3. **REFRAIN** from ordering anti-HAV IgM testing in asymptomatic individuals.
4. **ADVISE** patients with suspected hepatitis A who consumed the Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend frozen berry mix to stop eating it and to retain the opened bag and any unopened bags of the product. If hepatitis A infection is confirmed, they should await instructions from Public Health.
5. **ADVISE** patients who received a direct notification call or letter from Target Pharmacy that they received a potentially contaminated prescription medication to follow instructions to exchange the medications.

TRANSMISSION AND OUTBREAK-SPECIFIC EXPOSURE CRITERIA

Persons with hepatitis A shed HAV in their feces and are infectious from two weeks before through one week after symptom onset. Person-to-person transmission through the fecal-oral route is most common in the United States, especially among household members or sexual partners. However, cases can also occur from exposure to fecally-contaminated food, liquids, or other items placed in the mouth. Medications packaged by an infected pharmacy worker pose a low risk. Exposure criteria in the current situations are:

- Consumed “Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend” frozen berry and pomegranate mix, purchased at Costco since late February 2013 OR Harris Teeter Organics Antioxidant Berry Blend; or



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- Received a phone call and/or letter from Target Pharmacy since June 3, 2013, notifying the customer that they received a prescription between May 5-24, 2013, that was filled by a pharmacy employee infected with HAV; AND ingested these medications.

Persons who did not meet either criterion are not at increased risk for HAV infection through other purchases or interactions at Costco or Target stores.

POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP)

1. Persons who are considered to be immune and who do not require PEP have:
 - Two documented doses of hepatitis A vaccine prior to their exposure; OR
 - A positive anti-HAV IgG prior to their exposure; OR
 - A positive HAV IgM or total anti-HAV during or up to 4 months after consistent clinical illness
2. Persons who had one prior dose of HAV vaccine are likely protected but should complete the series with a second dose if it has been at least 6 months since their first dose.
3. All other exposed persons should receive a dose of single-antigen HAV vaccine or immune globulin (IG) (0.02 mL/kg) or both as soon as possible within 2 weeks of last exposure.
 - HAV vaccine is preferred over IG for PEP in persons 1-40 years of age because efficacy data for its use as PEP has been studied in this age group. However, HAV vaccine may be used for PEP in older people or in infants 6-12 months of age, especially when IG is unavailable or in short supply.
 - IG is preferred for persons at increased risk of severe or fatal HAV infection:
 - Chronic liver disease
 - Immune compromise from HIV/AIDS, hemodialysis, organ or bone marrow transplants, or other immunosuppressant medications
 - Adults > 40 years of age, particularly adults \geq 75 years as limited data suggest antibody response after a single dose of HAV vaccine in persons >40 years may be reduced

CLINICAL MONITORING OF EXPOSED PERSONS AND REPORTING SUSPECT CASES

Asymptomatic exposed persons should **not** be tested for HAV infection, as false positive HAV IgM results are common in asymptomatic persons. *Symptomatic* exposed persons should receive liver function tests, HAV IgM serology testing, and tests for other infectious or non-infectious etiologies as clinically indicated. Report suspected and confirmed cases of acute HAV infection within 1 working day of diagnosis to the ACD Unit at (510) 267-3250 or fax a Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) form to (510)268-2111.

SPECIMEN AND PRODUCT TESTING

Patients with suspected hepatitis A who consumed the Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend frozen berry mix should retain the opened bag and any unopened bags of the product. If hepatitis A infection is confirmed, ACPHD may contact them to obtain the product if CDC wishes to test it.

Serum from patients with confirmed hepatitis A infection who consumed the Townsend Farms berry product may be requested by ACPHD for genotyping by the CDC. ACPHD may contact the clinical laboratory directly.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ACPHD Hepatitis A web page, <http://www.acphd.org/hepa.aspx> -FAQs for the public and links to CDC, CDPH, and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) resources.

- ACPHD Hepatitis A Information Line for the public – 510-267-8006

CDPH Hepatitis A web page, <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/HepatitisA.aspx> - FAQs for health care providers, information on Hepatitis A Post Exposure Prophylaxis, California case counts.

CDC Hepatitis Outbreak web page: <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/Outbreaks/2013/A1b-03-31/index.html>