

Public Health Advisory

June 1, 2013

Multistate outbreak of Hepatitis A potentially associated with a frozen berry blend food product

CDC is collaborating with public health officials in several states and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to investigate a multistate outbreak of Hepatitis A illnesses. While we are not aware of any cases of Hepatitis A cases related to this outbreak in Alaska at this time, it appears the suspect food product was distributed in Alaska. Bulleted recommendations are below, as well as preliminary results from the ongoing investigation from CDC.

Further details and recommendations can be found

at <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/Outbreaks/2013/A1b-03-31/index.html>

- If you have purchased 'Townsend Farms Organic Anti-Oxidant Blend' product from any store, do not eat it and discard any remaining product.
- If you have consumed this product in the past two weeks, and are unsure if you have ever received Hepatitis A vaccine, contact your health care provider to discuss the possibility of getting vaccinated to prevent illness.
- Contact your health care provider if you develop symptoms concerning for Hepatitis A, such as yellow eyes or skin, abdominal pain, pale stools or dark urine.

Highlights

- As of May 31, 2013, 30 people ill with acute hepatitis A that may be linked with consumption of a contaminated product have been reported by five states: Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and California. These numbers are expected to change as the investigation continues. Based on epidemiologic investigation of 19 cases:
 - 12 (63%) ill people are women
 - All people are ages 18 or older, ranging from 25 – 71 years
 - Illness onset dates range from 4/29/2013 – 5/17/2013
 - 9 (47%) ill people have been hospitalized
 - 11 (65%) of 17 ill people interviewed reported eating 'Townsend Farms Organic Anti-Oxidant Blend,' a frozen berry and pomegranate seed mix
 - 11 persons who have provided purchase information reported purchasing this product from 'Costco' markets; however, investigations are ongoing to determine if this product was sold at other stores or venues.
- Investigation by state health departments, FDA, and CDC is ongoing. Costco is notifying its members who purchased this product since late February 2013, and has removed this product from its shelves

- Preliminary laboratory studies of specimens from two cases suggest the outbreak strain of hepatitis A virus (HAV) is genotype 1B. This strain is rarely seen in the Americas but circulates in the North Africa and Middle East regions.
 - This genotype was identified in a 2013 outbreak in Europe linked to frozen berries and another 2012 outbreak in British Columbia related to a frozen berry blend with pomegranate seeds from Egypt.
 - According to the label, The Townsend Farms Organic Anti-oxidant Blend frozen berry mix associated with illness contained pomegranate seeds and other produce from the US, Argentina, Chile, and Turkey.
 - Hepatitis A is a human disease and usually occurs when an infected food handler prepares food without appropriate hand hygiene. However, food contaminated with HAV, as is suspected in this outbreak, can cause outbreaks of disease among persons who eat or handle food.

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