Information about Hepatitis A and Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend of Frozen Berries

June 2, 2013

What is the situation?
To date, about 30 people in 5 states, including California, have gotten sick with hepatitis A after eating Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend of frozen berries – a mixture of cherries, blueberries, pomegranate seeds, raspberries and strawberries – purchased from Costco stores. Costco has taken the product off its store shelves, and is alerting consumers that purchased the product since late February 2013 not to eat it. The product may also be sold at other stores, and the investigation is ongoing.

Here in Contra Costa, there is one case of Hepatitis A that is likely linked to this outbreak - a 62 year old woman from East County who was hospitalized early in May and has since recovered. She purchased the frozen berry blend from Costco here in Contra Costa.

Contra Costa Public Health was notified that approximately 880 bags of frozen berries were sold at Costco stores in Contra Costa in the last 4 weeks.
How do we know that these frozen berries are the problem?
During the investigation to determine where people got hepatitis A, most of the people who got sick reported eating this brand of frozen berries from Costco. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is in the process of testing the product for hepatitis A virus to confirm.

What should I do?
Check your freezer. If you bought the Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend of frozen berries, throw it away and do NOT eat it.

What if I ate the frozen berries?
If you are already immune to hepatitis A, then you are protected. If you are not immune to hepatitis A, then you may be able to get a shot to help protect you if you ate the berries in the last 14 days.

How do I know whether I am immune to hepatitis A?
You are immune if you had hepatitis A disease in the past, or you have gotten hepatitis A vaccine. Check your vaccination records. Since the late 1990’s, hepatitis A vaccine has been routinely given to children as part of their regular shots, so most children and teens are already protected. Also, many international travelers get hepatitis A vaccine at a travel medicine clinic before they travel.

What if I am not immune to hepatitis A?
If you are not immune to hepatitis A, and you ate Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend of frozen berries in the last 14 days, then you may be able to get a shot to help protect you from hepatitis A illness. Most people can get the hepatitis A vaccine, although some people may be recommended to get Immune Globulin. Information on the hepatitis A vaccine is available here: [http://www.immunize.org/vis/hepatitis-a.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/vis/hepatitis-a.pdf)

Where can I get vaccinated for hepatitis A?
Check with your regular medical provider, or this list of Community Providers to see if they offer hepatitis A vaccine. [http://cchealth.org/immunization/pdf/community-providers-list.pdf](http://cchealth.org/immunization/pdf/community-providers-list.pdf)


What if I am not immune and it has been more than 14 days since I ate the frozen berries?
It would not be helpful to get the hepatitis A vaccine if you ate the frozen berries more than 14 days ago. If you get sick, even with mild symptoms, contact your health care provider right away.

What are signs of hepatitis A?
Hepatitis A illness would start between 2 and 6 weeks after eating the frozen berries. Common symptoms are dark yellow or brown urine, yellowing of skin and white parts of eyes (called jaundice), diarrhea or light-colored stool (poop), fever/chills, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, upset stomach, stomach pain in the upper right side of the belly, and fatigue. Hepatitis A disease can be mild, especially in children, or it can be severe, with symptoms lasting
several months and requiring hospitalization. If you get sick, even with mild symptoms, contact your health care provider right away.

**If I get symptoms of hepatitis A, can I infect others?**
Yes. Hepatitis A virus is found in the stool or poop of infected people. It usually spreads when infected people contaminate objects, food or drinks with their stool or poop, and other people put the contaminated objects or food in their mouth. It spreads when:

- An infected person does not wash hands thoroughly after using the bathroom
- A caregiver does not wash hands thoroughly after cleaning up stool or poop of an infected person
- An infected person prepares or handles food or drink for others
- The food or water supply becomes contaminated
- Close or sexual contact with an infected person

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 health provider immediately if you have even mild symptoms of hepatitis A.

More information about hepatitis A is available on our website cchealth.org/hepatitis-a or by calling Contra Costa Public Health Communicable Disease at 925-313-6740.