

The Meridian Weekly

Sunday, November 13, 2016

Hepatitis A Food Recall

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submitted by Jennifer Holton

LANSING – Today, the Michigan departments of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and Health and Human Services (MDHHS) launched a website for consumers to be able to find out if they may have eaten frozen strawberries currently under recall within the past two weeks. Earlier this week, the International Company for Agricultural Products and Processing (ICAPP) issued a recall after hepatitis A was detected in four lots of frozen strawberries exported to the U.S. The recalled products were distributed for sale to, and use in, food service establishments nationwide — not for use in food products offered for individual retail sale direct to consumers.

Local public health departments are working in partnership with MDARD and food businesses to ensure the recalled product is not being used and necessary steps to protect public health are taken.

As of November 4, over 800 food establishments have been contacted by local health departments as part of the recall response, to determine which businesses may have been effected by the recall.

Approximately 90 licensed food businesses and restaurants may have received and served the recalled product within the last two weeks. A list of these food businesses is available at www.michigan.gov/HepArecall. This list could change as the investigation continues, including addition and removal of businesses from the list.

MDHHS and CDC are advising post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for unvaccinated persons who have consumed these strawberries in the last two weeks. If given within two weeks of exposure, a single dose of hepatitis A vaccination can protect against illness. Those with evidence of previous vaccination do not require PEP. If you are unsure, contact your physician to find out if you have been vaccinated against hepatitis A.

PEP consists of hepatitis A vaccine for people between the ages of 1 and 40 years; and hepatitis A virus-specific immunoglobulin (IG) for people outside of this age range. Hepatitis A vaccine can be substituted if IG is not available. PEP offers no preventive benefit to persons whose exposure occurred more than two weeks ago.

To determine if a vaccination is appropriate, persons who may have consumed the affected product, especially at any of the food businesses known or suspected of receiving the recalled products, should consult with their health care professional or local health department.

Restaurants and other food service operators who have processed and packaged any potentially contaminated products need to be concerned about cross contamination of cutting surfaces and utensils through contact with the potentially contaminated products. Food handlers should take steps to prevent the spread of hepatitis A, including washing and sanitizing display cases, refrigerators, cutting boards, surfaces, and utensils used to prepare, serve, or store potentially contaminated products. It's also important to wash hands with hot water and soap following the cleaning and sanitation process.

Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease that results from exposure to the hepatitis A virus, including from food. It can range from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious illness lasting several months. Illness generally occurs within 15 to 50 days of exposure and includes fatigue, abdominal pain, yellow skin (jaundice), abnormal liver tests, dark urine and pale stool.

In rare cases, particularly consumers who have a pre-existing severe illness or a compromised immune system, hepatitis A infection can progress to liver failure. Contact your health care professional or local health department immediately if you are experiencing symptoms of hepatitis A.

For more information about the multistate outbreak of hepatitis A, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/2016/hav-strawberries.htm>.