

Frequently asked questions: Berries product recall and Hepatitis A

Information for consumers – June 2017

About the product recall

Which products are being recalled?

The product that has been recalled is 300gm packs of Creative Gourmet frozen mixed berries with a best-before date of 15 January 2021.

An outbreak of hepatitis A virus infection has been identified to be potentially linked to the consumption of Creative Gourmet frozen mixed berries in 300gm packs. The product has been recalled as a precaution.

The berries in the product are sourced from China and Canada and were processed in China before importation by Entyce Food Ingredients, based in Victoria.

The product was distributed to consumers through IGA and Foodworks supermarkets nationally. The product was first distributed in Australia in October 2016.

Recalled product has been removed from the shelves by the supermarkets. Local government inspectors carry out checks to ensure recalls have been undertaken.

Does the recall apply to other Creative Gourmet products?

No. The recall applies only to the 300gm packs of frozen mixed berries.

Does the recall apply to any other frozen berry products?

No. The recall applies only to Creative Gourmet frozen mixed berries 300gm packs with a best-before date of 15 January 2021.

How could hepatitis A get into frozen berries?

It is not known at this point how the berries may have been contaminated. Hepatitis A virus can be transmitted through contaminated water or soil or through contact with an infected person.

Why doesn't freezing kill hepatitis A?

The freezing process does not destroy the virus. When the food is thawed it can still cause infection.

Should I keep the packet? Will I get a refund?

If you are currently suffering from the symptoms of Hepatitis A (*see next page*), retain the packet until you have seen your doctor.

You can take your packet back to the place of purchase. You may receive a refund.

If I have eaten this product, will I definitely catch hepatitis A?

No. It appears that the risk of infection is extremely low for anyone consuming the product.

How was the link between the berries and hepatitis A discovered?

Hepatitis A virus infection is uncommon in Australia. Most cases result from contact with the virus during international travel. The Health Protection Branch of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services investigates cases of hepatitis A reported by doctors to determine if there are any causes such as potentially contaminated food. In this instance there was no history of travel and the likely link between the cases was the potential consumption of Creative Gourmet frozen mixed berries.

Have the recalled berry products been tested for the hepatitis A virus?

The Department of Health & Human Services has obtained testing results on a number of 300gm packs of Creative Gourmet frozen mixed berries. The company and National Food Authorities have tested the product.

Testing of the berries was undertaken in a laboratory in Australia that can test for hepatitis A virus in food. The testing of hepatitis A in food is complex and test results have not been conclusive.

About Hepatitis A

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a viral disease that affects the liver. Anyone who has not been immunised either by vaccination or previous infection can be infected with hepatitis A. People can get the infection if they have direct contact with food, drinks or objects contaminated by the faeces (poo) of an infected person. The virus can survive for several hours outside the body but persists on the hands and in food for even longer and is resistant to heating and freezing. Heating and/or freezing food does not remove the risk of hepatitis A infection.

Additional information is available on the Better Health Channel:

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/hepatitis-a>

What are the symptoms of hepatitis A?

You can fall ill any time between 15 and 50 days after catching the virus. The average incubation period for the virus is 28 days. Many infected people, particularly children less than five years old, show few or no symptoms.

For older children and adults, the symptoms include:

- fever
- nausea
- abdominal discomfort
- dark urine
- yellow skin and eyes (jaundice).

Symptoms may last for several weeks but full recovery usually occurs.

How contagious is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is very contagious – see *How is it spread* below.

If I'm not showing symptoms can I still pass it on?

Yes, if you've contracted hepatitis A you're infectious for up to two weeks before the onset of symptoms until around one week after you develop yellow skin and eyes (jaundice).

How is it spread?

The virus is spread when it enters the mouth, which can happen when hands, foods or other items are contaminated with hepatitis A. The disease can also be spread sexually by oral–anal contact. A person with hepatitis A is infectious from two weeks before they show symptoms to one week after they develop symptoms.

How is it diagnosed?

Hepatitis A is easily diagnosed using a blood test. Your doctor will ask you questions about your recent travel, vaccination history and whether you have lived in a country where hepatitis A commonly circulates. Your doctor may also examine you for evidence of an inflamed (swollen) liver.

How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A. In most cases, your immune system will clear the infection and your liver will completely heal. Treatment aims to ease symptoms and reduce the risk of complications. Options for people who have been confirmed by their doctor to have hepatitis A infection may include:

- Resting – hepatitis A can make you tired and you have less energy for day-to-day life, so you should rest when necessary.
- Eating small meals more often – nausea can affect your ability to eat and can contribute to tiredness so eat high-calorie foods if nausea is a problem.
- Protecting your liver – the liver processes medications and alcohol so avoid alcohol and review your medications with your doctor.

Can Hepatitis A be prevented?

In this instance, the most important action you can take is to avoid consumption of the recalled product.

Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for people prior to travel to some countries or after contact with a confirmed case of hepatitis A.

Practising strict personal hygiene can reduce the risk of catching hepatitis A. Steps you can take include:

- Wash your hands with soap and hot running water before handling food, after going to the toilet and after handling used condoms or having contact with nappies or the anal area of another person.
- Clean bathrooms and toilets often, paying attention to toilet seats, handles, taps and nappy change tables.

Can I get a hepatitis A vaccination?

Hepatitis A vaccination is recommended for people who may be exposed to others infected with hepatitis A.

The Department of Health and Human Services is not recommending routine hepatitis A vaccination for people who have consumed the recalled product and are well.

For a further details on hepatitis A vaccination see the Better Health Channel

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/hepatitis-a>

If you have purchased the product

I have this product in my freezer but haven't eaten it – what should I do?

Do not eat the product. If you wish, you can take the packet to the place of purchase and you may receive a refund.

If you have eaten the product or given this product to others to eat

If I have eaten this product, will I definitely catch hepatitis A?

No. It appears that the risk of infection is extremely low for anyone consuming the product.

I have eaten this product but don't feel unwell – what should I do?

Monitor yourself and others who consumed the product for symptoms of fever, nausea, abdominal discomfort or jaundice (yellow skin, eyes or dark urine). Symptoms may appear between 15 and 50 days after catching the virus from eating the potentially contaminated product. If symptoms appear, see your doctor immediately. There is no need to be tested if you feel well.

In the meantime, practice good hygiene. Steps you can take include:

- Wash your hands with soap and hot running water before handling food, after going to the toilet and after handling used condoms or having contact with nappies or the anal area of another person.
- Clean bathrooms and toilets often, paying attention to toilet seats, handles, taps and nappy change tables.

I have eaten this product and am feeling unwell – what should I do?

It is important to identify symptoms early to help prevent the disease spreading. If you have symptoms including fever, nausea, abdominal discomfort or jaundice (yellow skin, eyes or dark urine), see your doctor immediately. Take this fact sheet with you.

I have eaten this product and I am pregnant – what should I do?

If you have symptoms including fever, nausea or abdominal discomfort, see your doctor immediately. Take this fact sheet with you.

If I have eaten this product – should I get a hepatitis A vaccination?

The Department of Health and Human Services is not recommending routine hepatitis A vaccination for people who have consumed the recalled products and are well. If you have any concerns about your health you should see your doctor for advice. For more information on the hepatitis A vaccination visit the Better Health Channel factsheet <<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/hepatitis-a>>.

I am responsible for a food business, a school, health service, child care service or an aged care facility and I have provided this product to consumers – what should I do?

Where possible, inform consumers of the date(s) that they may have consumed the product and provide them with a copy of this fact sheet or a link to it. Make them aware that, if they develop symptoms of concern, they should see their doctor immediately.

I have cooked with this product – what should I do?

The hepatitis A virus is resistant to heating and freezing. This means you can still get sick even if you have cooked the product. If you have any remaining product, or food cooked with the product, do not eat it.

Monitor yourself and others who consumed the product for symptoms of fever, nausea, abdominal discomfort or jaundice (yellow skin, eyes or dark urine). Symptoms may appear between 15 and 50 days after catching the virus from eating the potentially contaminated product. If symptoms appear, see your doctor immediately.

In the meantime, practice good hygiene. Steps you can take include:

- Wash your hands with soap and hot running water before handling food, after going to the toilet and after handling used condoms or having contact with nappies or the anal area of another person.
- Clean bathrooms and toilets often, paying attention to toilet seats, handles, taps and nappy change tables.

Even if you have cooked the product at high temperatures, for example to make jam, you should follow this advice. While the use of heat may reduce the risk of infection it is not possible to be sure that all hepatitis A virus will be destroyed.

I'm worried about my family's health, what should I do?

If you are concerned about your own health or your family's health, see your doctor or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.

If you are being tested for hepatitis A

How long will it take to get the results?

Once you have had a blood sample taken and sent to a lab, you will usually get results within a few days.

Should I do anything differently while I wait for results? For example, should I go to work?

Practice good hygiene. If you have symptoms including fever, nausea and abdominal discomfort, do not go to work. Do not send children with symptoms to school or child care. If possible, avoid preparing food for others while waiting for your results. Contact the Australian Red Cross Blood Service for advice before you donate blood, as it may be a number of weeks before you can donate after consuming the recalled product.

If you have been diagnosed with hepatitis A

What should I do if I have been diagnosed with hepatitis A?

Follow your doctor's advice.

In some cases, depending on your occupation, you may require a certificate of recovery before you can return to work, school or a children's services centre such as child care or kindergarten.

For example, food handlers, health care workers with direct patient contact and child care workers should not return to work for seven days after they become sick or until they receive a medical certificate of recovery.

Children should not return to school, child care, kindergarten or other children's services centres for seven days after they become sick or until they receive a medical certificate of recovery.

Contact the Australian Red Cross Blood Service for advice regarding when you can resume donating blood.

About food safety and food safety regulation

Who is responsible for deciding to recall a food?

In Victoria, the Department of Health and Human Services can mandate a food recall, however most food recalls are voluntarily undertaken by the affected manufacturer or distributor.

Who regulates food imports?

The Commonwealth Department of Agriculture is the body responsible for regulating which foods can or cannot be imported by law. Once a food clears the Australian border it then comes under the regulation of the relevant state or territory.

How safe is imported food?

Australia's food supply is one of the safest in the world. All imported food must comply with the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. This issue is limited to the recalled product in question.

More information

Further information regarding this issue may be published on the Chief Health Officer web pages of the Department of Health and Human Services website if required.

For health concerns, see your doctor or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.

See Better Health Channel fact sheets for more information on:

- Hepatitis A: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/hepatitis-a>
- Hepatitis: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/hepatitis>
- Personal Hygiene: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/personal-hygiene>
- Travel immunisation: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyiving/travel-immunisation>
- Workplace safety – infection control:
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/workplace-safety-infection-control>

Australian Red Cross Blood Service: <http://www.donateblood.com.au/>

Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code: www.foodstandards.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx

Entyce Food Ingredients Pty Ltd - <http://www.entyce.com.au/>

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 1300 651 160, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

© State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services June 2017.