

Chief Health Officer Alert

10 June 2016

Status: Active

Hepatitis A risk associated with FoodWorks Yarram

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Issued by:	Professor Charles Guest, Chief Health Officer
Issued to:	Health professionals

Key messages

- A risk of hepatitis A exposure has been linked to food prepared at FoodWorks Yarram located at 261 Commercial Rd, Yarram from 27 April 2016 to 9 June 2016. Council's Environmental Health Officers have attended the premises to ensure that a clean-up occurs at the premises, in accordance with Department of Health and Human Services Guidelines for the Investigation of Gastroenteritis, to stop any potential transmission.
- **Advise your patients not to consume, and discard, any ready-to-eat products prepared on site and purchased from FoodWorks Yarram between 25 April 2016 and 9 June 2016.**
- **Do not test well patients** for hepatitis A virus infection, as tests are not useful until symptoms have developed.
- **Do not vaccinate for hepatitis A**, unless your patient has an alternative indication such as chronic liver disease or planned travel to a country with endemic hepatitis A. Those exposed are unlikely to be within the 14-day period during which the vaccine would have any protective effect.
- **Take blood for hepatitis A total antibody and hepatitis A IgM antibody** in patients who have symptoms compatible with hepatitis A virus infection within 15–50 days after consumption of ready-to-eat foods from FoodWorks Yarram. Compatible symptoms are two or more of fever, malaise, abdominal discomfort, loss of appetite and nausea.
- **Only take blood for liver function tests and hepatitis A virus PCR testing if there is hepatitis A serology consistent with acute infection OR clinical evidence of hepatitis**, such as jaundice. The cost of PCR will be borne by the patient unless these criteria are met.
- **Notify any suspected case of hepatitis A infection** to the department immediately by calling 1300 651 160 so that timely prophylaxis of contacts can be provided.

What is the issue?

Consumers have been warned to avoid eating ready-to-eat food prepared at FoodWorks Yarram between 25 April 2016 and 9 June 2016. This food may be contaminated with hepatitis A virus and should be discarded.

Consumers should also discard any fresh fruit and vegetables bought from FoodWorks Yarram during the same period.

Who is at risk?

Anyone who has consumed ready-to-eat produce purchased from FoodWorks Yarram that was purchased between 27 April 2016 and 9 June 2016. Examples include: meats purchased from the delicatessen, fruit and vegetables that are not peeled or cooked and pre prepared salads.

Symptoms and transmission

Hepatitis A virus infection can take between 15 to 50 days to develop following exposure to the virus.

Hepatitis A virus infection is uncommon, and normally associated with travel to countries affected by endemic hepatitis A. Hepatitis A is spread when traces of faecal matter containing the virus contaminate hands, objects, water or food and are then taken in by mouth.

Illness due to hepatitis A typically causes acute fever, malaise, anorexia, nausea and abdominal discomfort. This can be followed a few days later by dark urine and jaundice. Symptoms usually last several weeks although convalescence may sometimes be prolonged. Severe illness may occasionally occur particularly when hepatitis A infection complicates pre-existing liver disease. Infants and young children infected with hepatitis A virus may have a mild illness with few or no symptoms, with jaundice often being absent.

Prevention/treatment information

- The identified food products should not be consumed, and should be discarded.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables purchased during the identified period should also be discarded.
- Individuals who have consumed these products during the period of concern and are well do not require testing or vaccination. The department may recommend vaccination for close contacts of a confirmed case of hepatitis A virus infection or if there is a **routine indication for hepatitis A vaccine**, which are:
 - Travellers (≥ 1 year of age) to hepatitis A endemic areas
 - Persons with chronic liver disease, liver solid organ transplant recipients and/or those chronically infected with either hepatitis B or hepatitis C viruses
 - Persons whose occupation puts them at increased risk of acquiring hepatitis A
 - Persons whose lifestyle puts them at increased risk of acquiring hepatitis A, including persons who engage in anal intercourse, men who have sex with men, persons who inject drugs (including inmates of correctional facilities) and sex industry workers
 - Persons with developmental disabilities
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children residing in the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

Testing

- Take a serum blood tube for hepatitis A total antibody and hepatitis A IgM antibody in patients who have symptoms compatible with hepatitis A virus infection in the 15–50 days after consumption of the identified foods. Compatible symptoms are two or more of fever, malaise, abdominal discomfort, loss of appetite and nausea.
- Only take blood for liver function tests and hepatitis A virus PCR testing if there is hepatitis A serology consistent with acute infection OR clinical evidence of hepatitis, such as jaundice. The cost of PCR will be borne by the patient unless these criteria are met.

More information

Clinical information:

[The Blue Book – Hepatitis A](http://ideas.health.vic.gov.au/bluebook/hepatitis-a.asp) (<http://ideas.health.vic.gov.au/bluebook/hepatitis-a.asp>)

[Australian Government Department of Health – Information for GPs on hepatitis and frozen berry products recall](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-hep-A-info-gps-frozen-berry.htm) (www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-hep-A-info-gps-frozen-berry.htm)

Consumer information:

[Better Health Channel](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Hepatitis_A_affects_the_liver) (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Hepatitis_A_affects_the_liver)

[Hepatitis Victoria](http://www.hepvic.org.au) (www.hepvic.org.au)

Contacts:

Members of the public who are unwell should consult their GP or call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24.

Health Professionals can call Department of Health and Human Services, Communicable Disease and Prevention Control on 1300 651 160.



Professor Charles Guest
Chief Health Officer

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