

3 June 2013

Hepatitis A Outbreak Linked to Frozen Berry Product: Guidance for Clinicians

A growing number (>30) of hepatitis A cases in western states with onsets since late April has been linked to consumption of “Townsend Organic Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend” frozen berries. This product was sold exclusively at Costco stores in 3-lb. bags. This is a blend of frozen cherries, blueberries, pomegranate seeds, raspberries, and strawberries, commonly used to make smoothies, etc. To date, no cases have been confirmed in Oregon, but the product was sold here.

Should you see patients with suspect acute hepatitis, ask about consumption of the implicated frozen berry product. Please notify the patient’s local health department immediately about anyone with signs or symptoms of acute hepatitis and a history of product consumption since March 1; they will follow up with the patient for more details.

You may get calls from patients who have eaten this product but are not ill. In some cases, illness can be prevented through prompt active or passive immunization as outlined below.



Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

PEP is recommended for anyone who:

- ate any Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend within the previous 14 days, *and*
- is not already considered immune.

Immunity can be presumed for those:

- with a history of hepatitis A, *or*
- with a history of vaccination (2 doses ever, or 1 dose given within the past 6 months).

We are recommending vaccine prophylaxis (1 dose) for everyone with recent exposure *except* infants (<1 year old) and those who are immunocompromised, who should get immunoglobulin (IG, 0.02 ml/kg). *Note that this is a deviation from standard ACIP recommendations, which do not include vaccine for persons >40 years old.*

The safety of hepatitis A vaccination during pregnancy has not been determined. Because this is an inactivated vaccine, risk to the fetus is presumably low. Our recommendation is to give IG if you have it, vaccine if you don't.

Unfortunately, any prophylaxis given >14 days after exposure is ineffective (and we don't have stuff to waste).

Treatment is supportive; there is no specific therapy.