



This alert contains information on investigations in progress and/or diagnoses that may not yet be confirmed.

The Physician Alert is intended primarily for the use of local health care providers, should be considered privileged, and should NOT be distributed further.

## Two cases of acute hepatitis A associated with a multi-state outbreak of acute hepatitis A

### BACKGROUND



The Washoe County Health District (WCHD) in collaboration with the Nevada State Health Division, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), are investigating an outbreak of hepatitis A associated with Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend, a mix of frozen

berries and pomegranate seeds sold at Costco and perhaps other stores. As of May 31, 2013, 30 cases have been identified among 5 western states. Onset of illness of cases ranges from mid-April 2013 to May 24<sup>th</sup> 2013. There are two laboratory confirmed cases reported in Washoe County since May 20, 2013. Both cases consumed this product prior to their illness. Based on the epidemiologic information to date, Costco has pulled the product and will be notifying those that have purchased this product. This message is being provided to healthcare providers about the risk of hepatitis A associated with the above-mentioned product. WCHD will distribute additional information as it becomes available.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- ◆ If you are seeing patients of any age for an illness compatible with acute hepatitis A (discrete onset of signs and symptoms, including nausea, vomiting, anorexia, fever, fatigue, malaise, abdominal pain, jaundice, dark urine, clay-colored stool, joint pain), obtain a history for traditional risk factors as well as potential exposure to the product mentioned above.
- ◆ The diagnosis of acute hepatitis A virus (HAV) infection is based on serologic testing for immunoglobulin M (IgM) antibody to HAV. Test results for anti-HAV IgM are positive at the time of onset of symptoms and usually accompany the first rise in the alanine aminotransferase (ALT) level. This test is sensitive and specific, and the results remain positive for 3-6 months after the primary

infection and for as long as 12 months in 25% of patients.

- ◆ Anti-HAV immunoglobulin G (IgG) appears soon after IgM and generally persists for many years. The presence of anti-HAV IgG in the absence of IgM indicates past infection or vaccination rather than acute infection. IgG provides protective immunity.
- ◆ If you are seeing a patient with a food exposure history within the past 14 days who is severely immunocompromised and/or who has chronic or severe liver disease, please call 775-328-2447 (24/7/365) and consult with WCHD staff members.
- ◆ Clinicians at Emergency Rooms, Urgent Cares and pharmacies with walk-in vaccination clinics, and/or local travel clinics may expect to see increased visits of clients who demand vaccination against hepatitis A virus.

### INFORMATION FOR YOUR PATIENTS AND THE PUBLIC:

- ◆ If you ate Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend of berries within the past 14 days and you are not ill, have not been vaccinated with a series of two hepatitis A vaccines, and do not have a documented history of acute hepatitis A infection, you should be evaluated immediately to see if you should receive preventive vaccine or other prophylaxis.
- ◆ Do not eat Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend mix of frozen berries obtained from any location and throw them away in a manner that prevents others from eating them.
- ◆ If you become ill within 15-50 days of consuming this product, see a healthcare provider and provide the information that you ate this product.
- ◆ If you do not have access to a healthcare provider, contact WCHD at 775-328-2447.

#### For More Information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have online information available at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/Outbreaks/2013/A1b-03-31/index.html>

*(Adapted from New Mexico Department of Health)*