

HEPATITIS A UPDATE

Information for NSW General Practitioners

Please distribute this information to all staff

Key points for GPs:

1. A brand of frozen mixed berries has been recalled due to a link with a national outbreak of hepatitis A
2. Patients who have consumed the berries and are WELL do not require testing or vaccination
3. Patients who have consumed frozen berries and HAVE SYMPTOMS of hepatitis should be tested with hepatitis A serology
4. Suspected cases of hepatitis A should be notified to the local public health unit so that timely prophylaxis of contacts can be provided

Summary

Public health investigation of a national outbreak of locally-acquired hepatitis A during May 2017 is linked to eating frozen berries during the incubation period.

A batch of "Creative Gourmet" Frozen Berries (300g, best before 15 Jan 2021) is now subject to a national recall. See the Food Standards Australia New Zealand website for product details: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/media/Pages/Recall-of-frozen-mixed-berry-product.aspx>

There have been no cases in NSW linked to consumption of frozen berries, but the product was distributed throughout the state. A national public health investigation is ongoing.

Advice for patients

- Berries subject to the recall should not be consumed. They can be returned for a refund to the place of purchase or discarded
- The risk to individuals who have eaten the berries of acquiring hepatitis A is low, however it is important that they look out for symptoms of hepatitis and seek testing if symptoms develop
- People who have eaten the berries and are well should pay close attention to hand hygiene for seven weeks after they have last ingested the berries
- Testing is not indicated for asymptomatic patients

Patient investigation

- If patients present with symptoms of hepatitis, investigate as usual, and ask about berry consumption and include hepatitis A IgM and IgG serology
- Advise patients to not prepare food, provide personal care for others, have sex, or donate blood
- Contact your local public health unit on 1300 066 055 immediately to assist with patient assessment and arrange prophylaxis for their close contacts, and to consider other public health control measures

Vaccination

- Certain groups, including people with pre-existing liver disease should be routinely vaccinated against hepatitis A (Aust Immunisation Handbook 10th Ed. pp203-4)
- Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine (with at least 6 month interval) confer lifetime protection
- Infection can be prevented in contacts of cases if hepatitis A vaccine (or in special situations immunoglobulin) is administered within 2 weeks of first contact - seek PHU advice.
- As the risk to individuals who ate affected berries is very low, vaccination for people who report eating affected berries as their only risk is not recommended.