May 2018: Food Safety News Hepatitis A Out-Break

Officials in Michigan, warn about new hepatitis A cases:

Public health officials in Michigan are alerting people to possible exposure to the hepatitis A virus after confirmation of infected food-service workers.

The illnesses are part of a multi-state outbreak that has sickened about 1,200 people and killed almost 50. Infected people are usually contagious before they develop symptoms. The highly contagious virus can be easily transmitted through foods or beverages. Unvaccinated people have only two weeks after potential exposure to seek post-exposure treatment. The Michigan food-service workers are employed at an Buffalo Wild Wings restaurant, respectively.

Initially, most victims in the multi-state outbreak were homeless people or substance abusers. However, from 25 to 35 percent of infected people are neither homeless nor substance abusers. Also, food-service workers are increasingly being identified in multiple states as being infected, which has the potential to expose large groups of people to the virus. In Michigan, officials reported a case of hepatitis A has been confirmed in a food service worker at the Buffalo Wild Wings on Mound Road north of 12 Mile in Warren. Anyone who ate at the restaurant between March 24 and April 9 was potentially exposed to the virus.

Officials inspected the restaurant Tuesday. The management is working with the officials and the restaurant has been approved to operate, the Macomb County Health Department said. Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease caused by a virus. The disease can range from a mild illness to a severe sickness that can last several months. For some people it causes lifelong complications.

Michigan:

In Michigan, as of March 14, public health officials had confirmed 783 cases, resulting in 25 deaths and 632 hospitalizations.

Health officials from the state and hardest hit municipalities are working to vaccinate people who are at highest risk, including people who are homeless or incarcerated, drug users and men who have sex with other men.

A number of food handlers in Michigan have been confirmed as infected with the virus, spurrying post-exposure vaccination recommendations from health officials.

Symptoms of Hepatitis A can include fatigue, loss of appetite, stomach pain, nausea and the yellowing of the eyes or skin. Some people who are infected do not develop symptoms. However, the virus can easily spread via foods and beverages. Of the states involved in the ongoing outbreak, between one-fourth and one-third of the victims are neither homeless nor substance abusers. Infected people, including food-service workers and other food handlers, can spread the virus before they develop symptoms.

The virus can also spread through close personal contact and contaminated surfaces. It can survive freezing temperatures for years. Hepatitis infection can cause a yellowing of the eyes and/or skin, which is referred to as jaundice. Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. The virus is shed in feces and is most commonly spread from person to person by unclean hands contaminated with microscopic amounts feces. Symptoms of infection may include sudden abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, headache, dark urine, and/or vomiting often followed by yellowing of the skin and eyes.
Michigan posts 25th hepatitis A death; restaurant worker sick:

An outbreak of hepatitis A has claimed another life in Michigan. Also, another restaurant worker has tested positive for the highly contagious virus, exposing an unknown number of people who ate at a Red Lobster in the past month. The death toll in Michigan stands at 25 as of the state health department’s most recent update, which included information up to Feb. 14. The state reported 751 confirmed cases as of that date, with more than 80 percent having required hospitalization.

Most people infected in the multi-state outbreak, which is described as having begun in California although Michigan has been tracking cases just as long, have been homeless or substance abusers. However, depending on the state, one-fifth to one-third of victims have been neither homeless nor substance abusers.

The outbreak, which includes cases in California, Michigan, Kentucky, Utah, Nevada, New York, Arkansas and Oregon, has sickened more than 1,600 people and killed at least 46. Hepatitis A can be spread through food and beverages that are contaminated during production or by infected people during food preparation or serving. Consequently, infected restaurant employees or other food-service workers can expose other employees or customers — often without knowing it because people are contagious before symptoms develop.

Potential exposures at Red Lobster:
The most recently reported restaurant worker in Michigan who tested positive for hepatitis A potentially exposed people who ate, drank or worked at the Red Lobster restaurant at 27760 Novi Road in Novi, MI, from Jan. 15 through Feb. 14. It is past the window of opportunity for many unvaccinated people who were at the restaurant during the possible exposure period. The post-exposure hepatitis A treatment must be given within two weeks of exposure or it is not effective.

Anyone who ate or drank anything from the implicated Red Lobster in Oakland County has developed symptoms of hepatitis A should immediately seek medical attention, county health officials said in a public advisory.

“Vaccination can prevent the disease if given within 14 days after potential exposure,” said Kathy Forzley, director of health and human services for Oakland County. “If you have eaten at this location during these dates and have not been vaccinated for hepatitis A or have a sudden onset of any symptoms, contact your doctor.”

Since the beginning of the outbreak in August 2016, public health response has included increased healthcare awareness efforts, public notification and education, and outreach with vaccination clinics for high-risk populations. No common sources of food, beverages, or drugs have been identified as a potential source of infection. Transmission appears to be through direct person-to-person spread and illicit drug use. Those with history of injection and non-injection drug use, homelessness or transient housing, and incarceration are thought to be at greater risk in this outbreak setting. Notably, this outbreak has had a high hospitalization rate.

Hepatitis A in Michigan:

Most children in the United States have been receiving hepatitis A vaccinations since the preventive became a routine recommendation in 2006. Even though it has been available since 1996, the vast majority of adults have not been vaccinated.

Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver caused by a virus. The virus is shed in feces and is most commonly spread from person to person by unclean hands contaminated with microscopic amounts feces. Symptoms of infection may include sudden abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, headache, dark urine, and/or vomiting often followed by yellowing of the skin and eyes. Symptoms may appear from 14 to 50 days after exposure, but usually develop about one month after exposure to the virus, according to public health officials. Some people who are infected do not become sick, but they are contagious.

Monroe County Health Department (MCHD) has confirmed a second case of Hepatitis A in an individual who works at a local restaurant. MCHD is providing information to alert residents and guests to the possible exposure and to recommend prompt Hepatitis A vaccination or Immune Globulin (IG) treatment to potentially exposed individuals. The diagnosed individual works at Tim Hortons Restaurant located at 404 S. Monroe Street in Monroe. Anyone who consumed food and/or drink from the restaurant between December 10, 2017 and December 28, 2017 may have been exposed. Concerned individuals are urged to contact MCHD or their health care provider with questions.

Anyone who has consumed food and/or drink at Tim Hortons from December 10th to December 28th, should monitor for symptoms of Hepatitis A which include fatigue, poor appetite, stomach pain or tenderness, nausea or vomiting, dark urine, and yellowing of the skin (jaundice). Most children less than 6 years of age do not experience symptoms. Symptoms typically appear 2 to 6 weeks after exposure. Individuals with symptoms should call their health care provider and seek medical care.

Earlier, The Department is extended their free Hepatitis A walk-in clinic, through the week of December 18 through the 22 where at least 1,800 people were vaccinated after the first employee with hepatitis A was announced. The clinic was for anyone who consumed food and/or drink between November 21 and December 8 from the same Tim Horton’s location.

Hepatitis A vaccine or Immune Globulin (IG) treatment may provide protection against the disease if given within two weeks of exposure. Anyone potentially exposed to Hepatitis A should contact their healthcare provider to be assessed for vaccination or IG treatment.

Hepatitis A vaccine is available from health care providers, pharmacies and at MCHD. People who have had Hepatitis A disease or have previously received two doses of the hepatitis A vaccine do not need to be vaccinated. Hepatitis A is caused by the Hepatitis A virus, and it can cause damage to the liver and cause other health problems. Public health officials and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) are continuing to see an elevated number of hepatitis A cases in the state.
Hepatitis A Overview:
Hepatitis A is a serious, highly contagious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). HAV is found in the feces (poop) of people with hepatitis A. You can get hepatitis A by eating contaminated food or water, during sex, or just by living with an infected person. Illness can appear 15-50 days after exposure and you can be sick for several weeks. In some cases, people can die. Although not all people infected with hepatitis A experience illness, symptoms can include:

- nausea and vomiting
- belly pain
- feeling tired
- fever
- loss of appetite
- yellowing of the skin and eyes
- dark urine
- pale-colored feces (poop)
- joint pain

There are steps you can take to reduce the risk of Hepatitis A transmission. Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable illness. While the hepatitis A vaccine is recommended as a part of the routine childhood vaccination schedule, most adults have not been vaccinated and may be susceptible to the hepatitis A virus. The best way to reduce the risk of getting hepatitis A is to get vaccinated with two doses of Hepatitis A vaccine.

It is also recommended to wash your hands after using the restroom and before preparing meals for yourself or others. Use your own towels, toothbrushes, and eating utensils. Do not have sex with someone who has HAV infection or share food, drinks, or smokes with other people.

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What can the public do to protect themselves and their communities?
- Get vaccinated against hepatitis A
- Wash hands after using the restroom and before eating or preparing meals for yourself or others
- Use your own towels, toothbrushes, and eating utensils
- Do not have sex with someone who has HAV infection
- Do not share food, drinks, drugs, or smokes with other people
- If you think you may have hepatitis A, see your medical provider
- If you have hepatitis A, please cooperate with your local public health to help protect others

Vaccination Information:
Hepatitis A can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine. Stop the spread of this infection.

Who Should Get the HAV Vaccine?
- Persons who are homeless.
- Persons who are incarcerated.
- Persons who use injection and non-injection illegal drugs.
- Persons who work with the high risk populations listed above.
- Persons who have close contact, care for, or live with someone who has HAV.
- Persons who have sexual activities with someone who has HAV.
- Men who have sex with men.
- Travelers to countries with high or medium rates of HAV.
- Persons with chronic liver disease, such as cirrhosis, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C.*
- Persons with clotting factor disorders.

*Note: individuals with chronic liver disease (e.g., cirrhosis and hepatitis C) may not be at increased risk of getting HAV infections but are at increased risk of having poor outcomes if they are infected with HAV.

Michigan Hepatitis A Outbreak Cases and Deaths as of May 2, 2018*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Hospitalizations</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
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<td>828</td>
<td>665 (80.3%)</td>
<td>26 (3.1%)</td>
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*Table will be updated weekly by 4:00pm each Friday

References: CDC, Oakland County Health Department and MDHHS