
August 2016 - Multistate outbreak of hepatitis A linked to frozen strawberries

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Highlights

- Several states, CDC, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (<http://www.fda.gov/food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/ucm518775.htm>) (FDA) are continuing to investigate a multistate outbreak of foodborne hepatitis A. Information available at this time does not indicate an ongoing risk of acquiring hepatitis A virus infection at Tropical Smoothie Café's, as the contaminated food product has been removed as of August 8. Symptoms of hepatitis A virus infection can take up to 50 days to appear. As a result, CDC continues to identify cases of hepatitis A related to the initial contaminated product. As of September 14, 2016:
 - 119 people with hepatitis A have been reported from eight states: Arkansas (1), Maryland (12), New York (3), North Carolina (1), Oregon (1), Virginia (94), West Virginia (6), and Wisconsin (1).
 - 47 ill people have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.
- Epidemiologic and traceback evidence indicate frozen strawberries imported from Egypt are the likely source of this outbreak.
 - In interviews, nearly all ill people interviewed reported drinking smoothies containing strawberries at Tropical Smoothie Café locations prior to August 8 in a limited geographical area, including Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- On August 8, 2016, Tropical Smoothie Café (<http://tropicalsMOOTHIE.com/food-safety>) reported that they removed the Egyptian frozen strawberries from their restaurants in Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia and switched to another supplier. Out of an abundance of caution, Tropical Smoothie Café has since switched to another supplier for all restaurants nationwide.
- If you think you've gotten sick from drinking a smoothie containing frozen strawberries from a Tropical Smoothie Café prior to August 8, contact your doctor.
 - Food handlers should contact their doctors and stay home if they are sick with hepatitis A.

- Hepatitis A is a serious illness that affects the liver. Symptoms include yellow eyes or skin, abdominal pain, or pale stools.
- Information available at this time does not indicate an ongoing risk of hepatitis A virus infection at Tropical Smoothie Cafes. We are not yet aware of other restaurants that may have received frozen strawberries linked to this outbreak. If this information changes, CDC will update the public immediately.

➤ Initial Announcement - September 1, 2016

Advice to Consumers

Information available at this time does not indicate an ongoing risk of hepatitis A virus infection at Tropical Smoothie Cafes. We are not yet aware of any other restaurants or retailers that may have received frozen strawberries linked to this outbreak. If this information changes, CDC will update the public immediately.

- **Contact your doctor if you think you may have become ill from eating a smoothie containing strawberries from a Tropical Smoothie Café prior to August 8, 2016 in the following states:**
 - Virginia
 - West Virginia
 - Maryland
 - North Carolina
- **It is important that food handlers and restaurant employees contact their doctor and stay home if they are infected with hepatitis A. This helps prevent the virus from spreading.**
- **Not everyone will experience symptoms from a hepatitis A virus infection. Some people may experience mild flu-like symptoms. Other symptoms of hepatitis A virus infection include:**
 - Yellow eyes or skin
 - Abdominal pain
 - Pale stools
 - Dark urine

General Hepatitis A Prevention

Cases of hepatitis A have decreased dramatically over the last decade in large part due to successful vaccination programs and policies. Most new cases of hepatitis A are now related to international travel, and occasional foodborne outbreaks. Once a person becomes ill from hepatitis A, the virus can be easily transmitted to household or sexual partners. Thorough hand washing can help minimize transmission among close contacts.

The hepatitis A vaccine is recommended as part of routine childhood vaccinations and for adults at high risk. CDC recommends the following groups be vaccinated against hepatitis A:

- All children at age 1 year
- Travelers to countries that have high rates of hepatitis A
- Family members and caregivers of recent adoptees from countries where hepatitis A is common
- Men who have sexual contact with other men
- Users of injection and non-injection illegal drugs
- People with chronic liver disease
- People who are treated with clotting-factor concentrates
- People who work with hepatitis A infected animals or in a hepatitis A research laboratory

At a Glance

- Case Count: 119
- States: 8
- Deaths: 0
- Hospitalizations: 47

Latest Case Count Map



[Click map to view case count map and table.](#)

More Information

- Virginia Department of Health Hepatitis A Investigation (<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/blog/2016/09/10/hepatitis-a-investigation/>)
- FDA Investigates Outbreak of Hepatitis A Illnesses Linked to Frozen Strawberries (<http://www.fda.gov/food/RecallsOutbreaksEmergencies/Outbreaks/ucm518775.htm>)
- CDC Hepatitis A Questions and Answers for the Public
- CDC Hepatitis A Questions and Answers for Health Professionals
- Tropical Smoothie Café Statement (<http://tropicalesmoothie.com/food-safety>)

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Content source: Division of Viral Hepatitis (/hepatitis) and

National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention (/nchhstp)