

Outbreak of Hepatitis A Virus Infections Potentially Linked to Fresh Organic Strawberries



Food Safety Alert

At a Glance

- Reported cases: 17
- States: 3
- Hospitalizations: 12
- Deaths: 0
- Recall: No

Advice to Consumers

CDC recommends that people who purchased fresh organic strawberries branded as FreshKampo or HEB between March 5, 2022, and April 25, 2022, and then froze those strawberries for later consumption take the following actions:

- Check your freezer for these fresh organic strawberries. If you froze them to eat later, do not eat them.
- Throw away any remaining fresh organic strawberries that you froze for later consumption. If you are unsure of what brand you purchased, when you purchased your fresh organic strawberries, or where you purchased them prior to freezing them, you should throw the strawberries away.
- If you have eaten these organic strawberries, purchased fresh and later frozen, within the last 14 days and are not vaccinated against hepatitis A, contact your local health department or health care provider to discuss getting postexposure prophylaxis (hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin). Getting postexposure prophylaxis within 14 days of exposure can help prevent illness.
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Outbreak Information

- As of May 31, 2022, there are:
 - 17 outbreak-associated cases of hepatitis A reported from 3 states (California, Minnesota, and North Dakota).
 - Illnesses started on dates ranging from March 28, 2022, to April 30, 2022.
 - 12 people have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.
- Epidemiologic and traceback evidence indicate that fresh organic strawberries are a likely source of this outbreak.
 - In interviews, 10/13 (77%) reported eating fresh organic strawberries.

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. The hepatitis A virus is found in the stool and blood of people who are infected. The hepatitis A virus is spread when someone ingests the virus, usually through close personal contact with an infected person or from eating contaminated food or drink. Hepatitis A can be prevented with a vaccine, which is recommended for all children age one and adults at risk..

Symptoms of Hepatitis A

- Symptoms of hepatitis A usually appear 2 to 7 weeks after exposure and can include
 - Yellow skin or eyes
 - Not wanting to eat
 - Upset stomach
 - Stomach pain
 - Throwing up
 - Fever
 - Dark urine or light-colored stools
 - Joint pain
 - Diarrhea
 - Feeling tired
- Not everyone with hepatitis A has symptoms. Adults are more likely to have symptoms than children.

- People who get hepatitis A may feel sick for a few weeks to several months but usually recover completely and do not have lasting liver damage. In some people, though, the illness may be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized.
- In rare cases, hepatitis A can cause liver failure and even death. This is more common in older people and in people with other serious health issues, such as chronic liver disease.

Investigation Details

CDC, public health and regulatory officials in several states, and the US Food and Drug Administration are investigating a multistate outbreak of hepatitis A potentially linked to contaminated fresh organic strawberries reportedly sold as FreshKampo or HEB, purchased in the United States between March 5, 2022, and April 25, 2022. The Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency are also investigating an outbreak of hepatitis A; imported fresh organic strawberries have been identified as the likely source of that outbreak. Traceback investigations show that outbreak-associated cases in California, Minnesota, and Canada report having purchased fresh organic strawberries prior to becoming ill.

As of May 31, 2022, a total of 17 outbreak-associated cases of hepatitis A have been reported from 3 states.

Illnesses started on dates ranging from [March 28, 2022, to April 30, 2022](#). Ill people range in age from 9 to 73 years, with a median age of 58. Seventy-one percent of ill people are female. Of 17 people with available information, 12 (71%) have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.

Investigation of the Outbreak

Epidemiologic and traceback evidence indicate that fresh organic strawberries are a likely source of this outbreak. The potentially affected FreshKampo and HEB products are past shelf life and no longer available for purchase in the United States. People who purchased FreshKampo or HEB fresh organic strawberries between March 5, 2022, and April 25, 2022 and then froze those strawberries for later consumption should not eat them. These products may have been sold at the following retailers, including, but not limited to: HEB, Kroger, Safeway, Sprouts Farmers Market, Trader Joe's, Walmart, Weis Markets, and WinCo Foods.

In interviews, ill people answered questions about the foods they ate and other exposures in the 2 to 7 weeks before they became ill. Of people who were interviewed, 10/13 (77%) reported eating fresh organic strawberries. This proportion was significantly higher than results from a survey of healthy people in which 50% reported eating fresh strawberries in the week before they were interviewed.

FDA's traceback investigation is ongoing.