

## Hepatitis A Frequently Asked Questions

Revised May 4, 2017



The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) has been notified of imported frozen raw tuna or ahi cubes distributed on Oahu that tested positive for hepatitis A. The product, imported from Indonesia, was used to prepare poke sold between April 27–May 1 by food establishments on Oahu.

### Which food establishments sold the frozen raw tuna?

The imported frozen fish was used to prepare poke sold at the following locations:

- Times Supermarket and Shimas locations in Aiea, Kailua, Kaneohe, Kunia, Liliha, Mililani, Waipahu, and Waimanalo
- GP Hawaiian Food Catering
- Crab Shack Kapolei (also known as Maile Sunset Bar & Grill in Kapolei)
- ABC Store at 205 Lewers St.

Note: On May 3, 2017, DOH was notified by Tropic Hawaii that Aloha Sushi at 3131 N. Nimitz received but did not use any of the product to serve or sell food.

### What should I do if I ate poke from one of the food establishments between April 27–May 1?

Persons who consumed poke from the affected food establishments between April 27–May 1 may have been exposed to hepatitis A and are advised to:

- Contact their healthcare provider about receiving hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG), which may provide some protection against the disease if administered within two weeks after exposure. Persons without health insurance or a healthcare provider may call 2-1-1 for assistance.
- Monitor their health for symptoms of hepatitis A infection up to 50 days after exposure.
- Wash hands with soap and warm water frequently and thoroughly, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing food.
- Stay at home and contact their healthcare provider immediately if symptoms of hepatitis A infection develop.

### When might a person who was exposed develop symptoms?

Given the time of potential exposure and the incubation period of hepatitis A infection (15–50 days), the earliest we would expect a person who is not immune to develop any symptoms would be May 12<sup>th</sup>. Most infected people might take as long as a month to develop symptoms, so we would expect most to show symptoms more toward the end of May. However, symptoms may be prevented or at least decreased if a person who is not immune receives vaccine or IG (see previous) now.

I received one dose of hepatitis A vaccine, am I protected?

No vaccine is 100% effective, but more than 95% of adults will be protected within 4 weeks of receiving a single dose of hepatitis A vaccine. Persons who received one dose of hepatitis A vaccine more than 6 months ago should receive a second dose now for long term protection.

I still have some of the poke I purchased at one of the food establishments between April 27–May 1. What should I do with it?

Discard the food product immediately, and wash the container thoroughly with soap and hot water.

I ate poke on those dates from another food service establishment. Could I have also been exposed to hepatitis A?

At this time, testing by the distributor identified hepatitis A virus in one (1) lot of frozen ahi cubes distributed to the establishments listed above. Anyone wishing to obtain protection from hepatitis A in general should contact their healthcare provider to discuss vaccination.

I didn't eat the frozen ahi poke, but I ate the fresh one that was sold in the same refrigerated case. Should I also be vaccinated?

It is not known if cross-contamination between the fresh and frozen products may have occurred. Contact your healthcare provider to consider receiving hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG), which may provide some protection against the disease if administered within two weeks after exposure.

## OVERVIEW OF HEPATITIS A INFECTION

### What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). The disease can range from a mild illness lasting 1 or 2 weeks to a severe illness lasting for several months. HAV is found in the stool of people with hepatitis A infection and is usually spread through close personal/sexual contact or by consuming contaminated food or water. A person who has hepatitis A can easily spread the disease to others within the same household.

### What are the symptoms of hepatitis A infection?

Not everyone has symptoms. If symptoms develop, they may include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Dark urine
- Clay-colored stools
- Joint pain
- Jaundice (a yellowing of the skin or eyes)

Infants and young children with hepatitis A infection tend to have milder or no symptoms and are less likely to develop jaundice than are older children and adults.

Illness usually occurs from two weeks to as long as 50 days after exposure to the hepatitis A virus (i.e., consuming the contaminated product or direct exposure to stool from an infected person).

Persons should seek medical attention immediately should they develop symptoms.

### What should I do if I consumed food or drink contaminated with hepatitis A?

- Contact your healthcare provider about receiving hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG), which may provide some protection against the disease, if administered within two weeks after exposure
- Monitor your health for symptoms of hepatitis A infection up to 50 days after exposure
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water frequently and thoroughly, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing food
- If symptoms of hepatitis A infection develop, stay at home and contact your healthcare provider immediately

Persons who are not ill may continue their regular activities (work, school, and social) without restriction.

Testing of individuals who do not have symptoms of hepatitis A is not recommended, with the exception of food handlers (persons who directly prepare, serve, or handle food) in the food service industry. Hawaii State law requires food handlers who are contacts of cases and those who have been exposed to hepatitis A, if not vaccinated prior to exposure, be tested and have a negative hepatitis A IgM test before returning to work. If you are a food handler, contact your healthcare provider to request this test or, if applicable, provide documentation to your employer of your hepatitis A vaccinations administered prior to exposure. Note: hepatitis A vaccine or IG, if indicated, should be administered **after** results of the testing are received.

#### Who should be tested for hepatitis A infection?

Only patients who have symptoms of hepatitis A infection should be tested. See exception below.

Testing when you have no symptoms is not recommended: your test result may be negative because it is too early (given the long incubation period of hepatitis A disease)—that is, you may have a false negative result.

Exception: Unvaccinated food handlers (persons who directly prepare, serve, or handle food) who are contacts of cases or who have been exposed to hepatitis A must have a negative hepatitis A IgM test before they return to work.

#### How long is a person with hepatitis A contagious?

Patients with hepatitis A are most contagious during the 1 to 2 weeks before the symptoms start until at least 1 week after the start of first symptoms.

## **PREVENTION AND TREATMENT**

#### How can I prevent hepatitis A infection?

Hepatitis A infection is a vaccine preventable disease. Fortunately, most children and some adolescents have been vaccinated as part of routine and catch-up childhood vaccination recommendations. However, many adolescents and adults have not been vaccinated and will be susceptible.

Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine are needed for lasting protection. These doses should be given at least 6 months apart. For more information about the hepatitis A vaccine, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/hep-a.pdf>.

For a list of pharmacies that provide hepatitis A vaccine, go to <http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/vaccines-immunizations/vaccine-locators/>.

In general, persons with at least one of the following may be considered protected from hepatitis A:

- Persons who have had a blood test showing they are immune to hepatitis A or have had the disease
- Persons who have written documentation of adequate hepatitis A vaccination (see “Prevention” below)

Once a person recovers from hepatitis A disease, they develop antibodies that protect them from the virus for life.

#### What is post-exposure prophylaxis or PEP?

Post-exposure prophylaxis or PEP refers to administering hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG) to try to prevent disease after exposure to hepatitis A virus. PEP should be administered as soon as possible, within two weeks after exposure.

#### Who should get PEP after being exposed to hepatitis A?

Anyone who has consumed food or drink contaminated with hepatitis A should talk to their healthcare provider about receiving hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG), which may provide some protection against the disease if administered within the first two weeks after exposure.

#### What is the treatment for hepatitis A infection?

There is no special treatment for persons with hepatitis A infection. Most persons with hepatitis A infection will recover without complications but may require supportive therapy (e.g. fluids orally or, in some cases, given through the vein, medicines to control fever) and close monitoring by their physician. Persons should seek medical attention if they develop symptoms of hepatitis A infection.

#### Does hepatitis B vaccine provide any protection against hepatitis A?

Vaccination with hepatitis B vaccine does not provide protection against hepatitis A disease.

### **OTHER INFORMATION**

#### How long does hepatitis A virus survive outside the body?

The hepatitis A virus is extremely hardy. It is able to survive the body’s highly acidic digestive tract and can live outside the body for months. High temperatures, such as boiling or cooking food or liquids for at least 1 minute at 185°F (85°C), kill the virus, although freezing temperatures do not. To clean surfaces (e.g. tables, sinks, door knobs), detergent/soap and water can be used for washing surfaces thoroughly. To sanitize these surfaces, mix ¼ cup household bleach in 1 gallon cool water (or 1 tablespoon household bleach in 1 quart of cool water). Spray on surfaces that have been cleaned and rinsed and leave for at least 2 minutes. The surface can be left to air dry or can be wiped dry after 2 minutes.

What if I don't have health insurance or a healthcare provider?

For assistance, call Aloha United Way 2-1-1.

Does the Department of Health conduct food safety inspections at restaurants and other food service organizations?

Yes. Food safety inspection reports are available at the DOH Restaurant Inspection website <http://hi.healthinspections.us/hawaii/>.

For more information about hepatitis A, visit

[http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease\\_listing/hepatitis-a/](http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease_listing/hepatitis-a/).

Healthcare providers with questions regarding recommendations for hepatitis A prophylaxis and testing should call the Hawaii Department of Health Immunization Branch at 586-8300 (Oahu), 1-800-933-4832 (Neighbor islands).