

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
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HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

March 22, 2023

MEDICAL ADVISORY: RISK OF HEPATITIS A EXPOSURE FROM FROZEN ORGANIC STRAWBERRIES

Dear Healthcare Providers:

The Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) has been alerted by CDC and U.S. FDA to an ongoing outbreak of Hepatitis A virus (HAV) infection that has been linked to frozen organic strawberries. As of March 13, 2023, there are five outbreak-associated cases of HAV infection reported from one state (Washington). Epidemiologic and traceback evidence indicate that frozen organic strawberries imported from certain farms located in Baja California, Mexico by common supplier are the likely source of this outbreak.

CDC has launched an outbreak webpage ([Organic Strawberries Hepatitis A Outbreak | CDC](#)) and FDA posted an outbreak advisory ([Outbreak Investigation of Hepatitis A Virus Infections: Frozen Strawberries \(February 2023\) | FDA](#)).

Two companies have issued recalls in relation to this outbreak:

- [California Splendor, Inc. Recalls Kirkland Brand Bags of Frozen Organic Whole Strawberries Distributed by Costco in Los Angeles, Hawaii, and in Two San Diego Business Centers Because of Possible Health Risk | FDA](#)
- [Scenic Fruit Company Recalls Frozen Organic Strawberries and Frozen Organic Tropical Fruit Blend Because of Possible Health Risk | FDA](#)

The California Splendor, Inc. of San Diego, California [voluntarily recalled](#) lots of 4-lb. bags of Kirkland Signature Frozen Organic Whole Strawberries were sold at Costco stores in Hawaii as noted above. The lots subject to this recall include: 140962-08, 142222-23, 142792-54, 142862-57, 142912-59, 142162-20, 142202-21, 142782-53, 142852-56, 142902-58, 142212-22, 142232-24, 142842-55. Persons who purchased recalled frozen organic strawberries should not eat, serve, or sell these recalled frozen organic strawberries and should return or throw away any remaining product. Thus far, there have been no known cases in Hawaii related to this outbreak.

While the risk to the general public in Hawaii is low, for unvaccinated persons ≥ 1 year of age who have consumed frozen strawberries from the recalled lots, post exposure prophylaxis in the first two weeks after exposure with Hepatitis A vaccine should be strongly considered as this can help prevent illness. In addition to Hepatitis A vaccine, co-administration of GamaSTAN S/D immune globulin should be considered under certain circumstances. Both vaccine and immune globulin should be administered within 2 weeks after exposure for maximum protection. For

MEDICAL ADVISORY: Risk of Hepatitis-A Exposure from Frozen Organic Strawberries

March 22, 2023

Page 2

further information, please see: Prevention of Hepatitis-A Virus Infection in the United States: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, 2020 (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/rr/pdfs/rr6905a1-H.pdf>).

HDOH is advising clinicians to be vigilant for possible Hepatitis A infections in symptomatic individuals who have eaten these recalled frozen organic strawberries within the last 50 days and are not vaccinated against Hepatitis A.

HAV is transmitted via the fecal-oral route, usually through direct person-to-person contact or contaminated food or water. The illness is usually mild and self-limited; however, disease severity increases in persons who are older or immunocompromised, have chronic liver disease, or other underlying health conditions. Symptoms can include fever, fatigue, anorexia, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, diarrhea, pale stools, and jaundice. The average incubation period is 28 days (range: 15 – 50 days).


Laboratory confirmation of HAV infection requires detection of IgM antibodies against HAV (anti-HAV IgM) or a positive nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) for hepatitis A virus RNA. IgM generally becomes detectable 5–10 days before symptom onset and may remain detectable for up to 6 months. Providers should also obtain AST (SGOT) and ALT (SGPT) values (required as part of reporting cases to HDOH) to document elevated values as well as a complete medical and medication history.

Persons with HAV infection should be excluded from food-handling and direct-care occupations for the first 2 weeks of illness and at least 7 days after onset of jaundice. Children with HAV infection should be excluded from preschool for 10 days after illness onset.

HAV infection is urgently notifiable. Please report any clinically suspected case of Hepatitis A immediately – do **NOT** wait for laboratory confirmation:

Oahu (Disease Reporting Line)	(808) 586-4586
Maui District Health Office	(808) 984-8213
Kauai District Health Office	(808) 241-3563
Big Island District Health Office (Hilo)	(808) 933-0912
Big Island District Health Office (Kona)	(808) 322-4877
After hours on Oahu	(808) 600-3625
After hours on neighbor islands	(800) 360-2575 (toll free)

We appreciate your assistance in monitoring for and preventing HAV infection among Hawaii's residents and visitors.

Sincerely,


On behalf of Sarah K. Kemble,
Sarah K. Kemble, M.D.
State Epidemiologist