



## **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **HEPATITIS A INFECTION IN FOOD SERVICE EMPLOYEE PUBLIC URGED TO SEEK VACCINATION**

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) is investigating a confirmed case of Hepatitis A in a food service employee at the ice cream specialty store, Baskin-Robbins, located at the Waikele Center in Waipahu. The department is advising persons who consumed any food or drink products from this store between June 17 and July 3, 2016 (actual dates: June 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 30, and July 1 and 3) they may have been exposed to the disease. Unvaccinated individuals should contact their healthcare providers about the possibility of receiving hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin, which may provide some protection against the disease if administered within the first two weeks after exposure.

This individual is one in a growing number of ill reported to DOH. Since the outbreak began, there have been 52 cases of hepatitis A reported to and now confirmed by DOH. All cases have been in adults on Oahu, 16 have required hospitalization. The department issued a Medical Advisory to all healthcare providers on June 30 urging them to be vigilant and report all suspected hepatitis A infection immediately.

“The source of this outbreak has still not been determined. In the meantime, we encourage all persons consider and talk to their healthcare provider about getting vaccinated,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Park. “This case demonstrates the potential to spread hepatitis A virus to many others who remain susceptible. In an effort to stem the spread of disease, individuals, including food service employees, exhibiting symptoms of hepatitis A infection should stay home and contact their healthcare provider.”

Symptoms of hepatitis A infection include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, abdominal discomfort, dark urine, diarrhea, and yellow skin and eyes, and typically last several weeks to as long as two months. Treatment of hepatitis A is supportive, and most people will recover without complications.

While vaccination provides the best protection, frequent handwashing with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before preparing food can help prevent the spread of hepatitis A. Appropriately cooking foods can also help prevent infection.

Hepatitis A vaccine is readily available at local pharmacies. Two doses of hepatitis A vaccine, given at least six (6) months apart, are needed for lasting protection. For a list of vaccinating pharmacies, visit [http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/files/2013/07/IMM\\_Adult\\_Resource\\_List.pdf](http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/files/2013/07/IMM_Adult_Resource_List.pdf) or call the Aloha United Way information and referral line at 2-1-1.

Additional information about hepatitis A can be found on the DOH website at <http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/dib/disease/hepatitis-a/>.

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