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NEWS

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Hepatitis A case confirmed in food service worker

Central District Health offering free vaccine to impacted patrons and employees

Ada County — Central District Health (CDH) has confirmed a case of hepatitis A in a food service worker employed at Red Robin Gourmet Burgers and Brews, a restaurant located at 211 W. Parkcenter Blvd, Boise, ID 83706. Hepatitis A is a virus that affects the liver and can make people sick for a number of weeks. To-date, the food service worker is the only hepatitis A case in Idaho associated with this restaurant.

The food service employee worked various days during the period they were contagious. Based on the infectious period of hepatitis A, anyone who ate at Red Robin off Parkcenter during the following time frames should check their immunization records to see if they have received a Hepatitis A vaccine.

- July 24
- July 31 to August 7

The risk of becoming infected with hepatitis A through an infected food service worker is low but CDH encourages anyone who was a patron during this timeframe and has not received a hepatitis A vaccine, or is unsure about their vaccine status, to consider getting vaccinated. CDH is offering hepatitis A vaccine to anyone who may have been exposed at this restaurant during the infectious timeframe. We will bill insurance for administrative fees but there will be not additional out of pocket costs to clients. Those without insurance may qualify for free vaccine.

In order for the hepatitis A vaccine to help prevent possible transmission, patrons must get the vaccine within two weeks of the date they may have been exposed.

One vaccine provides 95 percent protection from hepatitis A, while the recommended two vaccines for adults, spaced six months apart offer lifetime protection.

“Though public transmission risk is quite low, we recommend that patrons who consumed food or drink at Red Robin on Park Center during this timeframe consider getting vaccinated and watch for symptoms of hepatitis A,” said Lindsay Haskell, staff epidemiologist with CDH. “Symptoms to watch for include abdominal pain, dark urine, fatigue, fever, jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), light-colored stools,” said Haskell. Other symptoms may include loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting. If symptoms occur, seek medical attention.

Symptoms of hepatitis A usually start within 28 days of exposure to the virus or within a range of 15-50 days. People infected with hepatitis A are most contagious from two weeks before onset of symptoms to one week afterwards. Not everyone infected with hepatitis A will experience all of the symptoms and some will not have any symptoms.

Make an Appointment / More Information

Impacted patrons and employees wishing to make a hepatitis A vaccine appointment, or who have questions about their immunization status, should contact a local pharmacy or healthcare provider. Beginning August 12th, impacted patrons and employees may also call Central District Health at 208-321-2229.

Those with other questions related to hepatitis A and potential exposure at this food establishment may call 208-327-8625 between 8 am and 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

How Hepatitis A Spreads

Hepatitis A easily spreads by entering the mouth after someone touches an object, food or drink contaminated with the virus. If an infected person does not wash their hands well, especially after using the bathroom, small amounts of virus can spread from the hands of the infected person to other objects, surfaces, and food.

Some people are at a higher risk for getting hepatitis A, including:

- People who are living with or caring for a person who already has hepatitis A
- People living homeless, especially those living unsheltered without good access to sanitation, hygiene and handwashing facilities
- People who have sex with someone who has hepatitis A
- Men who have sex with men
- Illicit drug users (does not have to be injection drugs)
- People with clotting disorders like hemophilia
- International travelers
- People with chronic liver disease, including hepatitis B and hepatitis C are at increased risk for severe infections.

Preventing Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A vaccination is the best way to prevent hepatitis A. The shot is safe and effective; anyone who wants to reduce their risk of hepatitis A should get vaccinated. Anyone who is in the higher risk groups

should receive the hepatitis A vaccine to protect themselves. Since 1999, children in Idaho routinely receive Hepatitis A vaccine on the recommended vaccine schedule. Central District Health is offering free vaccine to qualifying individuals. Visit cdhd.idaho.gov/dac-hepA to learn more.

Idaho's Hepatitis A Investigation

CDH, along with state public health, has been investigating a hepatitis A outbreak that began emerging in early 2019. To date, 27 cases of hepatitis A have been confirmed in Ada and Elmore counties, which are served by CDH. Neighboring counties including Canyon, Blaine and Twin Falls have also seen a recent increase in hepatitis A cases, bringing the state count to 43 since Jan. 1, 2019. In 2018, only eight cases of hepatitis A were reported in Idaho; one (1) of those cases was in Ada County.

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