



# COUNTY OF ORANGE HEALTH CARE AGENCY

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### Hepatitis A Potentially Associated with a Frozen Berry Blend

*Please note: This FAQ is specific to the current hepatitis A outbreak potentially associated with pomegranate seeds and the "Townsend Farms Organic Anti-Oxidant Blend" product. Please see the Orange County Public Health website <http://ochealthinfo.com/phs/about/dcepi/epi/disease/hepa> for more details about hepatitis A in general.*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state and local health officials and the US Food and Drug Administration are investigating a multistate outbreak of hepatitis A illnesses. Preliminary investigation suggests that illnesses may be linked to specific lots of pomegranate seeds found in the "Townsend Farms Organic Anti-Oxidant Blend" product. A second product associated with this pomegranate seed lot, Woodstock Frozen Organic Pomegranate Kernels, though not yet linked with human illness, was voluntarily recalled on June 26, 2013.

#### **What is hepatitis A?**

Hepatitis A is a contagious virus that can cause inflammation of the liver. Symptoms of hepatitis A infection may include jaundice (yellow eyes or skin), abdominal pain, dark urine, pale (light-colored) stool, extreme tiredness, loss of appetite, fever, nausea or vomiting. Some people, especially children, do not have any symptoms. Illness usually occurs between 15 to 50 days after exposure to the virus.

#### **How is hepatitis A spread?**

Hepatitis A is usually spread when the hepatitis A virus is taken in by mouth through contact with objects, food or drinks that are contaminated by feces, even tiny amounts, of an infected person. Contamination of food and water is more likely to occur in countries where hepatitis A is common and the sanitary conditions or personal hygiene are poor. Contamination of food can happen at any point: growing, harvesting, processing, handling, and even after cooking. In this situation, it is suspected that the frozen berry product is contaminated with the hepatitis A virus.

#### **How can the spread of hepatitis A be prevented?**

A vaccine is available to prevent hepatitis A and two doses are now part of the routine childhood immunization schedule in the United States. This vaccine is also recommended for persons at increased risk for hepatitis A (see the CDC Hepatitis A website <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/A/aFAQ.htm#overview> for list of high risk persons).

After exposure to hepatitis A, hepatitis A vaccine or another medication called immune globulin may be given to prevent infection in persons who have not already had hepatitis A and who have not been vaccinated previously.

Further spread of hepatitis A can be prevented by washing hands well with soap and water after using the toilet and changing diapers, and before handling food, ice or other beverages.

What should I do if I have purchased either the “Townsend Farms Organic Anti-Oxidant Blend” or the “Woodstock Frozen Organic Pomegranate Kernels” product?

- Do not eat the product
- Remaining Townsend product may be discarded or returned to the Costco where it was purchased
- Remaining Woodstock product should be discarded. Consumers should keep the proof of purchase
- If you consumed either product in the past two weeks and have not previously had or been vaccinated against hepatitis A, contact your health care provider to find out if you should be vaccinated. Hepatitis A vaccine can prevent illness if given within two weeks of exposure. If you do not have a health care provider, call the Orange County Health Care Agency Health Referral Line (1-800-564-8448) for more information.
- If you have already received the hepatitis A vaccine in the past, you are unlikely to become ill with the disease.
- If you develop yellow eyes or skin, abdominal pain, pale (light-colored) stools, or dark urine, contact your health care provider right away.
- For more information about the investigation, see the CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/Outbreaks/2013/A1b-03-31/index.html> . For more information about hepatitis A in general, see the HCA website <http://ochealthinfo.com/phs/about/dcepi/epi/disease/hepa> or the CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/A/aFAQ.htm#overview> .