

## **Confirmed Hepatitis A in a food handler working at the Scenic Drive 217 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South McDonald's in Lethbridge**

### **General FAQs**

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

Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver caused by a virus (germ). It can be a very mild illness in some people, especially young children. In other people, it can be severe enough to cause death. Hepatitis A is also called "infectious hepatitis" because it spreads more easily from one person to another than other types of hepatitis.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

Illness can occur within 15 to 50 days after exposure to the virus, but usually within 28 to 30 days. Persons with mild illness may have no symptoms at all. When symptoms do occur, they often begin suddenly with fever, tiredness, poor appetite, nausea and abdominal pain. A few days to a week later, the urine may become dark, the stools may become light in colour, and the eyes and skin may become yellow (jaundice). Some people, especially young children, do not become jaundiced when they have hepatitis A.

#### **Can hepatitis A be treated??**

There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A. However, it can be prevented with the use of hepatitis A vaccine. It is also important to wash hands well with soap and water before preparing or consuming foods.

#### **Is it safe to eat at this restaurant?**

- AHS has completed thorough inspection of the facility, and confirmed the facility meets all standards required to continue operating.
- The restaurant is in compliance with all public health codes.
- The positive case has not worked at the establishment since August 22nd and the virus typically only lives for up to 5 days.
- In consultation with our PH inspector, this facility voluntarily closed (temporarily) so as to complete a thorough cleaning of the site.
- Our public health inspector re-inspected the facility following the cleaning, and approved it to re-open to the public.

#### **What is the risk to the public?**

- Although the risk is low, Hepatitis A is a serious infection.
- Because individuals who ate food/consumed beverages at this location during the noted time frame may be at risk, we are offering the Hep A vaccine to these individuals to reduce the risk of infection.
- Individuals who have previously been infected with Hep A, or have previously received two doses of the Hep A vaccine are not considered at risk.

#### **What should someone do if they are experiencing signs of Hep A?**

- Visit your family physician and let them know about your potential exposure.

**What about the people who work at this location?**

- Employees working at this facility will also be offered vaccine. As with all immunization programs, Hep A vaccine is a personal choice.
- If an individual begins to show symptoms of Hep A he/she would be excluded from work.
- Currently, there are no further symptomatic individuals.

**Are you currently testing for any other cases?**

- There are no further symptomatic individuals.
- As is standard process, close contacts of this individual have been identified, some of whom may be tested as a precautionary measure, if deemed necessary.

**VACCINATION CLINICS**

**Who is eligible for immunization?**

- Any individual who consumed food or beverage from the Scenic Drive McDonalds between August 20th and 22nd, 2010 ONLY And
- is NOT already immune to hepatitis A is eligible to receive Hepatitis A vaccine and / or Immune globulin free of charge.

Individuals who have previously been infected with Hep A, or have previously received two doses of the Hep A vaccine are not considered at risk. If needed this immunization should be given on or before Sunday, September 5, 2010 in order to be effective against this specific exposure.

**LETHBRIDGE CLINICS**

West Pavilion of the Lethbridge Exhibition Park (3401 Parkside Drive South)

- Friday, Sept 3, 2010 from 1 pm to 7 pm for customers dining on August 20,21, or 22
- Saturday, Sept 4, 2010 from 9 am to 3 pm for customers dining on August 21 and 22 only
- Sunday, Sept 5, 2010 from 9 am to 3 pm for customers dining on August 22 only

**CALGARY CLINICS**

South Calgary CHC at 31 Sunpark Plaza SE, Calgary (2nd floor entrance on north side)

- Saturday, Sept 4, 2010 from 9 am to 3 pm for customers dining on August 21 and 22 only
- Sunday, Sept 5, 2010 from 12 pm to 3 pm for customers dining on August 22 only

**VACCINATION RELATED Q&A's**

**Are there clinics being set up in other parts of the province?**

- The need for clinics is being considered for other parts of Alberta
- If and when these clinics are deemed necessary this information will be shared with the public.

**Can I be vaccinated with Hepatitis A vaccine if I am pregnant?**

The safety of HAV [hepatitis A] vaccine given during pregnancy has not been studied in clinical trials. Since the vaccine is prepared from inactivated virus, however, there is no apparent risk to the developing fetus. Therefore, HAV vaccine may be given to pregnant women when indicated. HAV vaccine can be used safely in breast-feeding women. (The Canadian Immunization Guide, 7th edition)

- The decision to proceed with vaccination is a personal choice and includes consideration of the following factors:
  - risk of infection is high (risk is relatively low in this event)
  - illness would cause significant risk to mother or fetus (moderate to high for Hep A disease)
  - risk of adverse vaccine effects are low (true for Hepatitis A vaccine)

**Why are there immunization clinics only on September 3, 4 and 5<sup>th</sup>?**

- Vaccine is only effective if administered within 14 days of exposure. Immunizing after Sunday would not be effective.

**What do I do if I ate at the McDonald's restaurant on one of the above dates, but I cannot attend one of the vaccination clinics OR the timeframe for being vaccinated has passed?**

- The risk of infection from this potential exposure is low.
- Vaccine is only effective at preventing hepatitis A if given within 14 days of the exposure.
- Monitor for signs and symptoms of hepatitis A for 15-50 days after the potential exposure - if symptoms occur, contact your physician for assessment and indicate you may have been exposed at the Lethbridge McDonald's.

Call HealthLink Alberta if you have questions or concerns about symptoms you may be having:

403 943 5465 (Calgary)

780 408 5465 (Edmonton)

1 866 408 5465 (Toll Free)