

To: Parents/Guardians

From: Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health

Date: April 21, 2016

Subject: Hepatitis A associated with Costco Frozen Berry Product

Dear Parent/Guardian

On Friday April 15, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced a recall of *Nature's Touch Brand Organic Berry Cherry Blend* frozen fruits sold at Costco stores, which had best before dates up to and including March 15, 2018 and product UPC code 8 73668 00179 1. This product has been associated with cases of hepatitis A in several provinces. To date, New Brunswick has not had any cases of hepatitis A linked to this recall. However, in other provinces there have been 14 lab-confirmed cases of hepatitis A linked to this product, with 7 cases hospitalized.

In New Brunswick, Costco Canada has contacted 2,874 households to advise consumers directly of this recall. Costco is offering hepatitis A vaccine at all Costco locations (Moncton, Fredericton and Saint John) and in some schools to anyone that may have consumed the product within the past 14 days.

Hepatitis A vaccine works well to prevent the infection if one dose is given within 14 days after a person has been exposed to the virus. There is no evidence on the effectiveness of the vaccine if given outside of this period, however if you have any concerns please check with your health care provider.

Hepatitis A vaccine is not part of the New Brunswick Routine Immunization Program. However, you or your child may have already been given Hepatitis A vaccine for travel, work or other reasons. Individuals who have previously received a full course of hepatitis A vaccine are considered to be protected. Individuals who have not completed a full course are encouraged to do so.

Infants under 6 months of age, individuals with chronic liver disease, immunodeficiency, or those unable to receive the vaccine due to a medical condition should consult with their health care provider.

What should you do if you have been exposed to the recalled product?

You should watch for symptoms for up to 50 days post exposure as noted on the attached hepatitis A fact sheet. Most people with hepatitis A develop the following symptoms two to seven weeks after being infected with the virus: fever, loss of appetite, stomach cramps, jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), dark urine and fatigue. Symptoms are usually mild. The illness usually lasts one to two weeks; however, severe cases can last several months and most people recover without treatment. Symptoms are likely to be more severe among the elderly and people with weakened immune systems.

If you or your child have been exposed to hepatitis A, it is possible to spread the virus to other people before you experience any symptoms. For these reasons, if you think you or your child have been exposed to the virus, you can help prevent the spread of the hepatitis A virus by:

- washing your/your child's hands with soap and water before and after preparing and serving food and drinks;
- washing your/your child's hands with soap and water after using the washroom or changing diapers;
- sanitizing countertops, cutting boards and utensils before and after preparing food.

Since this a disease that is reported to Public Health by law, if you have been diagnosed with hepatitis A, you will be receiving a call from one of our staff to provide you with information and recommendations on the disease and how to prevent transmission to others.

Do not prepare or serve food and drinks to others if you have been diagnosed with hepatitis A.

References:

- Public Information Fact sheet on hepatitis A:
<http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/en/CDC/FactSheets/hepatitis-a.pdf>
- Public Health Notice: Public Health Agency of Canada: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/phn-asp/2016/hepatitisa-eng.php>
- Government of Canada recall notice: <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/inspection/2016/57960r-eng.php>

Sincerely,



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