Hepatitis A Situation in Southwestern Ontario Health Unit

A confirmed case of hepatitis A infection in a food handler who works at the TA Travel Centre located at 535 Mills Street in Woodstock, ON was identified by Southwestern Public Health. The restaurant is a popular travel stop on HWY 401 and many people outside of Southwestern Public Health may be affected.

All individuals who ate food at, or from, the TA Travel Centre from the restaurant menu (sit-down or takeout) between August 6 – 22, 2019 are potentially at risk. Those who ate from the buffet or ready-to-eat food from the convenience kiosks are not considered at risk and do not require follow-up.

Individuals identified as “at risk” should be offered post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) within 14 days of exposure. See Public Health Ontario for more information on advice for hepatitis A susceptible individuals. For those past the 14 day exposure window, they can be educated on the symptoms to watch for and to seek medical attention should symptoms develop. If PEP is indicated, contact the Environmental Helpline to order (905-723-3818).

Typically, hepatitis A is an acute, self-limiting liver infection. Clinical presentation varies with age at time of infection. Infection among children < 6 years of age is usually asymptomatic or mild without jaundice. Illness in older children and adults is typically characterized by a 1 – 7 day prodrome of abrupt onset of fever, malaise, loss of appetite, dark urine, nausea, and abdominal pain followed by jaundice.

There is usually complete recovery without complications; however, older persons and individuals with chronic liver disease and immunocompromising conditions have an increased risk of progressing to fulminant hepatic failure.

Transmission is primarily by the fecal-oral route, through direct contact with infected people or indirectly through ingestion of contaminated water or foods, and sexual activities that include direct or indirect oral-anal contact.

The incubation period ranges from 15 – 50 days with an average of 30 days. Individuals are infectious during the latter part of the incubation period, typically about 14 days prior to onset of symptoms and for about 7 days after jaundice appears.
Laboratory detection of anti-HAV IgM, in the absence of recent hepatitis A vaccination, confirms a case of hepatitis A. Serum should be submitted for anti-HAV IgM (acute infection) and anti-HAV IgG (immune status). Treatment is supportive only.

Exclude individuals such as food handlers, childcare staff and attendees, and healthcare workers from high-risk settings for 14 days after onset of symptoms, or 7 days after onset of jaundice, whichever comes earlier.

Hepatitis A is a disease of public health significance and must be reported to Durham Region Health Department. If hepatitis A is suspected or confirmed, please contact Environmental Helpline at 1-888-777-9613 or 905-723-3818.

Health care provider resources now available to order online durham.ca/HCP.