



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health

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February 28, 2007

Dear Patron:

We are writing to inform you that you may have had a low risk of exposure to hepatitis A at a recent event if you ate uncooked food at a reception catered by the Wolfgang Puck Company on February 11th at the Visual Effects Society Awards Dinner. You may have previously received misinformation about your risk from this event or about the incubation period of hepatitis A.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health was recently alerted that an employee at the Wolfgang Puck Catering facility in Hollywood was diagnosed with acute hepatitis A. Public Health is investigating the situation and is working closely with the management of Wolfgang Puck Catering.

After careful examination it was determined that the risk of exposure to hepatitis A to those that may have consumed food served at events in which this particular employee was involved is very low. No other cases of hepatitis A have been reported from this situation. Public Health's Environmental Health staff inspected the catering company and found no problems. No restaurants or Express Cafes owned and operated by Wolfgang Puck or Wolfgang Puck pre-packaged foods are affected by this situation and restaurant patrons are not at risk.

The Public Health Department has identified 9 events in February in which the affected food handler was involved in food preparation. We believe that those who ate uncooked food at these events may be at a very low risk for acquiring hepatitis A. However, if you attended the event and ate uncooked food, it is possible that you may have been exposed to hepatitis A.

This date is past the 2 weeks in which Immune Globulin (IG) would be effective to prevent acquiring acute hepatitis A. However, in the unlikely event that you experience symptoms of acute hepatitis A in the seven weeks after the event, we encourage you to visit your doctor to obtain a blood test for acute hepatitis A and medical care.

In the unlikely event that you are diagnosed with hepatitis A, immune globulin and hepatitis A vaccination may be recommended by your doctor for people with whom you have had close contact since the event. Close contacts included household members and sexual partners. If you have had acute hepatitis A in the past or if you have been vaccinated with the hepatitis A vaccine, you are not at risk for acquiring acute hepatitis A.

If you are diagnosed with acute hepatitis A before the end of March, it is essential that your physician notify the Los Angeles County Public Health Department at 213-240-7941. Prompt diagnosis will allow Public Health to identify and investigate cases of acute hepatitis A.

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General information about hepatitis A

Hepatitis A virus is spread by close physical contact and through fecal contamination of food or drink. Signs and symptoms you may experience if you do have hepatitis A include: jaundice (yellow skin or eyes), fatigue, fever and chills, accompanied by abdominal pain or vomiting, diarrhea, and light colored stool or dark urine. The incubation period for the virus to develop is 2 to 7 weeks. It is important to be diagnosed promptly – treatment with immune globulin (IG) within 14 days of exposure to the virus can be given to close contacts to protect them from getting hepatitis A. Thorough handwashing with soap and hot water after using the toilet and before handling food is the most important step in preventing the spread of the disease.

If you have any questions about hepatitis A we encourage you to call your personal physician, health care provider or your public health department; if you live in Los Angeles County, you can call the County information line at 211 from a land or mobile phone line. Hepatitis A information may also be found on our website at <http://lapublichealth.org/acd/> or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/a/index.htm>.

Please share a copy of this letter with other individuals that you know may have attended this event.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jonathan E. Fielding". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH
Director of Public Health and Health Officer

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