

Friday April 6, 2018

Hepatitis A Outbreak Linked To Frozen Pomegranate

NSW Health is advising consumers who have any imported frozen pomegranate purchased from Coles supermarkets in their freezer to not consume the product.

Late today NSW Health identified that seven locally acquired cases of hepatitis A had all consumed the imported product from the supermarket. Genetic testing available to date on some of the cases has identified a unique strain of hepatitis A.

NSW Health is working with other States and Territories to determine if they also have locally acquired cases of hepatitis A with this strain - genotype 1B.

Director of Communicable Diseases at NSW Health, Dr Vicky Sheppeard said NSW Health is working with the NSW Food Authority to confirm if the infection can be definitively linked to the Coles product.

“Symptoms of hepatitis A take from 15 to 50 days to develop. It is caused by a virus that spreads in contaminated food or through poor hygiene,” Dr Sheppeard said.

“Symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, fever and yellowing of the skin, dark urine and pale stools.

“In most people the symptoms resolve after a few weeks with supportive treatment, mainly rest and fluids.

“People who have eaten frozen pomegranate from Coles should consult their local doctor as early as possible should symptoms appear.

“Those who have consumed the product in the past two weeks may benefit from hepatitis A vaccination, if not already protected. If you are unsure if you have been vaccinated in the past it is safe to be revaccinated. Please check with your doctor.”

NSW Food Authority CEO Lisa Szabo said the Authority is working with Coles, NSW Health and other State and Commonwealth agencies to minimise the risk to consumers.

“This outbreak appears to be linked to imported frozen product. Fresh pomegranate has not been implicated, nor have Australian grown frozen pomegranate products,” Dr Szabo said.

Those affected by the current outbreak are based in Sydney, the Central Coast and Wollongong.

So far this year there have been nine locally acquired cases of hepatitis A in NSW.

For more information on hepatitis A go to:

http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Hepatitis_A.aspx