

Investigations of Food employees identified as a case of Hepatitis A

The definition of a food employee comes from the 2009 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code and is defined as an individual working with unpackaged food, food equipment or utensils, or food contact surfaces.

The protocol described below is based on national standards from FDA and CDC.

Steps for investigating a food employee who has been diagnosed with hepatitis A:

- 1) After a case has been reported to the Department of Health, a county health department epidemiologist will interview the individual and collect the following information:
 - a. onset of illness,
 - b. travel exposures,
 - c. occupation,
 - d. food history,
 - e. housing,
 - f. recent incarceration,
 - g. use of drugs,
 - h. social and environmental behaviors.
 - i. medical information
- 2) When an individual identifies their occupation as being a food employee, the County Health Department investigator will inform:
 - a. the appropriate regulatory authority,
 - b. environmental health staff,
 - c. department of health regional staff,
 - d. and request to conduct a joint unannounced assessment of the facility.
- 3) During the joint assessment, the team is reviewing:
 - a. the roles that the food employee had in the facility, and the work schedule
 - b. hand hygiene practices,
 - c. if there is bare hand contact with ready to eat foods,
 - d. illness policy of the facility,
 - e. previous inspection results from the appropriate regulatory agency.
- 4) Per national (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) recommendations, close contacts of the infected case, including other food workers, are offered hepatitis A post exposure prophylaxis (PEP).
- 5) If it is determined that the facility has questionable hand hygiene practices, and/ or the food employee had diarrhea while working, and the timing of exposure is such that PEP would be beneficial, we will work to provide timely recommendations for PEP measures to protect those who might have been exposed and **issue a patron notification**.

According to the CDC, "Most food handlers with HAV [hepatitis A virus] infection do not transmit Hepatitis A virus to exposed consumers or restaurant patrons." As of May 2, 2019, the Department has not identified transmission from a food worker to a patron.