
"To improve the health of our communities by identifying and assuring sustainable solutions to community health issues."

NEWS

Date: February 10, 2012

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Public Potentially Exposed to Hepatitis A at Boise Restaurant

The Central District Health Department (CDHD) is alerting patrons of the Cheesecake Factory, 330 North Milwaukee, Boise, that they may have been exposed to hepatitis A if they dined at the restaurant between December 13, 2011 and January 22, 2012. An employee working there was confirmed as having the disease, but is no longer infectious. The risk to public health is extremely low because the employee was not involved in food preparation. Still, there is the possibility that patrons could have been exposed to hepatitis A.

There is no evidence of a hepatitis A outbreak associated with this restaurant. Still, if patrons are exhibiting any symptoms of hepatitis, and they had food or drink at this restaurant between December 13, 2011 and January 22, 2012, they should contact their medical provider. CDHD does not provide primary care services. In addition, everyone potentially exposed should continue to wash their hands thoroughly to avoid the possibility of infecting others.

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. Hepatitis A can affect anyone. Hepatitis A virus is usually spread by eating or drinking food items that have been contaminated with hepatitis A from someone who hasn't properly washed their hands after using the bathroom. When that person handles food, the food may become contaminated with hepatitis A virus. Whoever eats the contaminated food may then become infected. This disease also easily spreads when a person doesn't wash his/her hands after changing an infected child's dirty diapers.

Symptoms usually occur abruptly and may include:

- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal discomfort
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin & eyes)
- Tiredness
- Nausea
- Dark urine

There is no specific treatment for the disease but symptoms may be treated and re-hydration may become necessary. The symptoms of the disease may vary from a mild illness lasting 1 -2 weeks, to a severely disabling disease lasting several months. In general, severity increases with age, but chronic infection does not occur with hepatitis A as it can with hepatitis B or C.

The Cheesecake Factory has fully cooperated with the investigation into the situation. The employee is believed to have practiced good hand hygiene. The risk of exposure is considered very small, but not zero.

If you have had a hepatitis A vaccine or have had the illness in the past, you are protected from hepatitis A infection. Good personal hygiene and proper sanitation can help prevent hepatitis A. Outbreaks of hepatitis A are relatively rare in the United States; however, when they occur, public health efforts are required to control the spread of the disease.

For more information on hepatitis A please visit the Central District Health Department website: www.cdhd.idaho.gov or call CDHD at 208-375-5211.

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