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ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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NEWS RELEASE

Hepatitis A virus identified in a food handler in Montgomery

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), in cooperation with Panera Bread in Montgomery, is investigating a food handler who is infected with hepatitis A virus. As a preventative measure, ADPH is suggesting customers who consumed food, whether dine-in, pickup, or delivery, between the dates of January 26 through February 5, 2019 be identified. These patrons may need the hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin to reduce their chance of illness.

Hepatitis A is a viral infection that can be transmitted person-to-person and by eating food or drinks prepared by an infected person. Hepatitis A vaccine can prevent infection, but only if given within 14 days of exposure to hepatitis A. The hepatitis A vaccine can be given to persons over 12 months of age who have not completed the two-dose hepatitis A vaccination series. Persons over 40 years old may also receive immune globulin.

“Adults with hepatitis A may have symptoms that include fatigue, low appetite, stomach pain, nausea, and jaundice. These symptoms usually resolve within two months of infection,” said Dr. Burnestine Taylor, Medical Officer for Disease Control and Prevention, ADPH. “Children less than 6 years of age generally do not have symptoms or have an unrecognized infection. Almost all people who get hepatitis A recover completely.”

If you have eaten food prepared at Panera Bread, located at 2998 Carter Hill Road, in Montgomery, Alabama between the dates of January 26 through February 5, 2019, contact your health care provider, pharmacy, or the Montgomery County Health Department regarding getting the vaccine as soon as possible. You may also contact your local provider if you are uncertain about your past vaccine status.

It is rare for hepatitis A to cause severe illness, but persons 50 years of age or older and those with other liver diseases are more at risk. The best way to prevent getting hepatitis A is to receive the vaccine within the first two weeks after exposure. Those who have previously been vaccinated with one dose of Hepatitis A vaccine need a second dose. Two doses are required to be considered protected from exposure.

For more information, please visit the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention at <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm>.

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