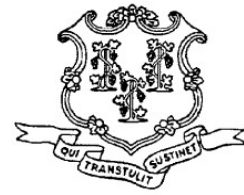


NEWS



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 23, 2003

Connecticut Department of Public Health
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Hepatitis A among Patrons of a Restaurant in Monroe

Hartford – The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Monroe Health Department are investigating six cases of hepatitis A involving patrons who consumed food at a restaurant in Monroe in November. All six patrons had onset of symptoms in early December. A seventh case of hepatitis A has been identified in a food worker at the restaurant who became ill in mid November.

Persons who ate food prepared at the McGowan's Pizzaland located at the Village Square Shopping Center, Route 111, Monroe, Connecticut in November and who develop or developed symptoms suggestive of hepatitis A between mid-December and mid-January should call their physician for further medical advice and, if needed, diagnostic testing for hepatitis A. Household members of persons who develop hepatitis A may benefit from an immune globulin shot.

In addition, because hepatitis A can be spread before the onset of symptoms, all persons who ate at the restaurant during November are also urged to wash hands thoroughly before preparing foods for others to avoid any potential further spread of disease. Hand washing should include vigorous soaping of the hands. All surfaces should be washed including the back of the hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails. Hands should then be thoroughly rinsed with running water.

Hepatitis A is a liver infection caused by a virus. It is usually a relatively mild illness that lasts 1 to 2 weeks, although it can be more severe in some people, particularly those with underlying liver problems. Persons who develop hepatitis A will become immune and never get the disease again. The early signs and symptoms of hepatitis A appear 2 – 6 weeks after exposure and commonly include mild fever, loss of appetite, nausea, tiredness, pain in the upper right side of the abdomen, dark urine, and jaundice (yellowing of the eyes or skin).

Persons with hepatitis A are most likely to spread the disease to others 14 days before feeling sick and approximately 1 week after their symptoms begin. Hepatitis A is found in stool and can be spread by water and food when these items are contaminated with the virus. This can occur if a food worker with hepatitis A has not thoroughly washed his/her hands after a bowel movement and then handles food.

Some people who are exposed to hepatitis A virus may benefit from immune globulin shots to avoid developing the disease or to reduce the severity of symptoms. Immune globulin is effective in preventing the symptoms of hepatitis A if given within 14 days of exposure. For patrons who consumed food at the restaurant in November, immune globulin is no longer likely to be effective. However, for household members of persons who develop hepatitis A, immune

Department of Public Health
December 23, 2003
Page two of two

globulin may be effective. Thus, we recommend that you contact your physician if you develop symptoms of hepatitis A.

The restaurant has cooperated fully with local and state health officials and has voluntarily closed until the following control measures are implemented: a satisfactory inspection of the facility, disposal of all food products that could put anyone at risk, and complete cleaning and sanitizing of food preparation equipment. Additionally, all food workers will adhere to a strict hand-washing policy and will use disposable gloves. With these control measures in place, the restaurant will be safe to eat at when it reopens.

Persons who have additional questions about hepatitis A may call the Monroe Health Department at (203)452-5422 or the State Department of Public Health at (860)509-7994.

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