For Immediate Release:

Health Department Warns of Possible Exposure to Hepatitis A at Tortilla Marissa Restaurant in Fort Collins

The Larimer County Department of Health and Environment is advising the public about a possible exposure to hepatitis A virus at the Tortilla Marissa’s restaurant located at 2635 S. College Avenue in Fort Collins.

A food worker employed at Tortilla Marissa has tested positive for hepatitis A, a disease that might be passed to others through food directly handled by the employee before any symptoms appeared. The restaurant is cooperating fully in the investigation and has agreed to voluntarily close until approved by the Department to reopen. The risk of transmission to others occurred primarily in June, 2014, but there is a very low risk that transmission might extend back to May of this year. As of today, no secondary cases have been reported by any customers, but the disease has a long incubation period (time from infection to illness) of 14-50 days.

Health Department Recommendations for those who have dined in the past 14 days:

Customers who consumed food or drinks (either dine-in or take-out) from the restaurant in the past 14 days could benefit from getting a Hepatitis A vaccination or Immune Globulin (IG) injection to reduce the risk of illness.

The Larimer County Health Department is recommending vaccine or IG shots for people who have eaten any food prepared at Tortilla Marissa’s if they can obtain preventive treatment within 14 days of their exposure. Shots can be obtained from private health care providers or at two special clinics the Health Department will be holding on Sunday and Monday specifically for those potentially exposed to Hepatitis A through this restaurant.

The Health Department will be providing shots free-of-charge at the Larimer County Health Department, 1525 Blue Spruce Drive, Fort Collins, on Sunday, June 29th, from noon to 5 p.m. and on Monday, June 30, from 5pm – 8 pm. These clinics are only for customers who have eaten food prepared at Tortilla Marissa’s since June 15 (for the Sunday clinic) or since June 16 (for the Monday clinic.) Information about signing up for the two clinics will be posted on the Larimer County website (www.larimer.org) by Saturday afternoon, June 28. Online pre-registration for the clinics is strongly encouraged, as it will significant reduce wait times to receive services.
Some pharmacies may be able to provide Hepatitis A vaccine, with a physician’s order, for those customers whose 14-day window will expire on June 27 or 28, if they cannot get into their provider’s office. **People who have had at least one vaccination for hepatitis A or have had the illness in the past are protected from hepatitis A infection and do NOT need to receive any shots.**

People who recently ate at Tortilla Marrisa’s who are not currently in the Larimer County area are urged to contact their state or local public health department or their health care provider to obtain necessary shots if they can do so within the 14-day window.

**Health Department Recommendations for those of that dined earlier in June or in May:**

Those who ate at the restaurant more than 14 days ago might have been exposed, but a shot would not offer protection from any potential exposure to food from this restaurant. They should monitor their health and contact their health care provider if hepatitis symptoms develop.

Symptoms of hepatitis A may include fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark urine, gray or white stools, and jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and/or skin). Symptoms are more severe in adults than children. For most people, symptoms usually appear about 4 weeks after ingesting the virus.

Anyone who develops symptoms should contact their health care provider and NOT prepare food for others. This is especially important for food workers, health care workers, and day care workers.

**Preventing Transmission:** Hepatitis A virus is shed in the stool and can be spread when an infected person does not properly wash his or her hands after using the bathroom, and then touches food or objects that others will put into their mouth. It is NOT spread by kissing, hugging, sneezing, or casual contact.

Thorough hand-washing can prevent the spread of hepatitis A virus. As a prevention measure, people should always wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the bathroom, after diapering, before preparing food, and before eating.

For information about hepatitis A, please contact the Colorado Health Emergency Line for Public Information (CO-HELP) at 1-877-462-2911, or 303-389-1687. Additional information about hepatitis A can also be found on the CDC website: [http://www.cdc.gov/Hepatitis/A/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/Hepatitis/A/index.htm)

Information about how to sign up for the Hepatitis A vaccination clinics provided by the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment will be available no later than Saturday afternoon through [www.larimer.org](http://www.larimer.org) or by calling 970-498-6706.

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