

Up To 5000 Exposed To Hepatitis A At Springfield Restaurant

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Up To 5000 Exposed To Hepatitis A At Springfield Restaurant **News**

Posted by : Randy

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(news-leader.com) - As many as 5,000 people might have been exposed to hepatitis A virus in May at a Red Robin restaurant in Springfield, county health officials announced Wednesday.



Those officials have set up immunization clinics for people who were at the restaurant from May 8 to May 16. The disease spread by a virus affecting the liver has been tied to a worker from the restaurant at 3720 S. Glenstone Ave.

Kevin Gipson, director of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, said the county worked with the state and federal governments to get the vaccine shipped to Springfield.

Kendra Findley, the administrator of community health and epidemiology, said the county received a report about the illness on Tuesday morning.

A statement from the restaurant says the eatery is now safe and that the problem was self-reported to health officials. Health officials agreed the restaurant is now safe.

Cyndi Steutzman and Janet Harbison were visiting Springfield on Wednesday from Schell City and stopped by Red Robin to grab food for a friend. Though the health threat has passed, Harbison said there should have been a sign in the restaurant or workers should have told her about the issue.

Steutzman had previous concern about a similar threat when her daughter was potentially exposed and had to get a vaccination after an outbreak stemming from a local fast food restaurant. Steutzman said, "It just scared me to death."

Ame Glasgow of Brookline said she and her husband and their two children ate at Red Robin on May 8. Glasgow said one of their children was previously immunized, and she was waiting to hear from her doctor's office about the other. Glasgow said she and her husband will probably attend one of the immunization clinics that the county has set up.

"It's pretty upsetting to think that there weren't enough safety precautions taken," she said.

A news conference was called at 2:30 p.m. Wednesday at the county Public Safety Center to alert the community to what officials called "a recent public health threat."

There will be free immunization clinics today and Friday at Remington's, 1655 W. Republic Road. If someone affected doesn't get a vaccine within 14 days of hepatitis A exposure, it does no good, officials say.

A Mercy clinic, the Smith Glynn Callaway Clinic at 3231 S. National Ave., will have hepatitis A vaccine during the holiday weekend. Hepatitis A is a liver disease that results from infection with the virus. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The health department has set up a hotline for people to call if they have questions. It is at 417-829-6200. The hotline will be staffed from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. today and 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday.

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Hepatitis A is usually spread when a person ingests fecal matter — even in microscopic amounts — from contact with objects, food or drinks contaminated by the feces or stool of an infected person, according to the CDC.