

Recall on Strawberries in Washington and Oregon

Frozen strawberry products linked to hepatitis A cases in Washington

Scenic Fruit Company of Gresham is recalling frozen "Organic Strawberries" sold at Costco, Aldi, KeHE, Vital Choice Seafood and PCC Community Markets, and frozen "Organic Tropical Fruit Blend" sold at Trader Joe's, due to an outbreak of hepatitis A illnesses.

Five outbreak-associated cases of hepatitis A have been reported in Washington since March 13. The five cases occurred between November 11 and December 27, 2022, and two individuals required hospitalization. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), everyone reported eating frozen organic strawberries.

Although no patients with hepatitis A in Oregon have been definitively linked to the consumption of these products, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) officials are monitoring the outbreak in Washington. In addition, OHA is interviewing persons diagnosed with hepatitis A to determine if any have consumed frozen berries.

"Since these products were available in Oregon stores, we want to let people know about them so they can take steps to protect themselves and their families,"



Frozen strawberries recalled after finding link to illness outbreak.

said Ann Thomas, M.D., M.P.H., a public health physician in OHA's Acute and Communicable Disease Prevention Section. "At this point, OHA is carefully investigating any new cases of hepatitis A virus to determine if they are associated with the outbreak, but we have not yet been able to link any Oregon cases to these products."

The company has ceased the production and distribution of the product as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the company continues their investigation into what caused the problem. In addition, the company is removing all inventories of the affected lot from sale.

"The company is voluntarily recalling the affected products and cooperating with

the FDA," said Karel Smit, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Food Safety Program manager. "The purpose of the recall is to remove the products from commerce and prevent the public from consuming potentially affected products."

Although no hepatitis A virus has been found in the products, consumers should stop eating the product, and return it to the place of purchase for a full refund, or throw it away. Consumers with questions may contact the company at customer.service@scenicfruit.com.

Thomas said, "People who believe they've gotten sick from consuming frozen strawberries purchased at Costco or Trader Joe's should contact a health care provider."

Since 2014, Oregon has seen an average of 20 cases a year, with 2020 having the highest number at 29. Symptoms of hepatitis A infection include jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes), tiredness, stomach pain, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea (frequent watery bowel movements), dark urine, and light-colored bowel movements.

The disease varies in severity, with mild cases lasting two weeks or less and more severe cases lasting four to six weeks or longer. Hepatitis A infection can result in hospitalization. Some individuals, especially children, may not develop jaundice and may have a mild illness that can go unnoticed. However, even mildly ill people can be highly infectious. People with symptoms suggestive of hepatitis should consult a physician immediately, even if symptoms are mild.



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