



# MADISON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

To protect, promote and improve the health of our community.

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## Health Department investigating hepatitis A case in a food handler

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** Contact: Jim Thacker PIO 859-626-4259/606-643-3033

January 8, 2019. Berea, KY. The *Madison County Health Department* is investigating a *single* case of hepatitis A in a food handler who worked while infectious at *Mario's Pizza on Chestnut Street in Berea, KY* this past month. Hepatitis A is caused by a virus that is passed person to person through fecal-oral contact. The risk to patrons who ate at *Mario's* is very low.

It should be noted that *Mario's* is fully cooperating with local and state health officials to investigate this case and to ensure the health and safety of its employees and patrons. It should also be noted that *Mario's* received a score of **95%** on their most recent health department inspection. Restaurant owner Jim Upton says, "We're glad to have the guidance and expertise of the Madison County Health Department on this issue and all of our remaining employees are being vaccinated as soon as possible."

Since October, the Madison County Health Department (MCHD) has been recommending hepatitis A vaccination for everyone in the community as the number of cases in the county, region and throughout the state continues to climb. Madison County Health Department declared county wide outbreak status on October 24<sup>th</sup>.

Hepatitis A can be spread when: an infected person does not wash his or her hands properly after going to the bathroom and then touches objects or food; a caregiver does not properly wash his or her hands after changing diapers or cleaning up the stool of an infected person; someone engages in certain sexual activities. Hepatitis A can also be spread through food or water through an ill food handler or by using contaminated items.

Symptoms of infection usually appear 15 to 50 days after exposure and can include: fever, jaundice, grey-colored stools, dark urine, abdominal pain, vomiting, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea and joint pain. Some people, especially children, may have no symptoms. This is why proper handwashing is critical. Symptoms usually resolve in 2 months but can last as long as 6 months. There is no treatment for Hepatitis A and some people require hospitalization. If you have these symptoms you should contact your primary care provider for testing.

Hepatitis A can be prevented by receiving the Hepatitis A vaccination. This vaccination is available to anyone 12 months of age or older and is given in two doses six months apart. Everyone is also reminded that handwashing is the best way to prevent infection. Handwashing should be emphasized especially after using the bathroom, changing a diaper or preparing and eating food.

Further information on Hepatitis A and prevention of the infection can be found at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/hepatitis.htm>. Information for food service employers or employees can be found at <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/RetailFoodProtection/default.htm>.