Impact of ill Food Handlers during a Hepatitis A outbreak

County of San Diego, Department of Environmental Health
Food and Housing Division

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Foodborne Outbreak Team

- Members: DEH, PHS (EPI), PHL
  - Dept. Environmental Health (FHD)
  - Public Health Services (PHS) – “Epi” (epi investigations)
  - Public Health Lab
- Constant flow of information
- Meet often and communicate daily (usually)
- DEH
  - Investigations and interactions with food facilities
  - Food handler removal, clearance
Ill Food Handler Removal, Investigation

- CA Health and Safety Code
  - Food handler removal (restrict or exclude)
    - Confirmed communicable disease
      - DEH (excludes, restricts, clears) upon request by PHS “Epi”
  - Investigation at facility
  - Confirmed illness
    - Worked while symptomatic
    - Food exposures of interest at their place of work
Hep A Outbreak response & Challenges

- The outbreak seemed to be P2P
  - Concern that it could become foodborne

Challenges

- Lack of disinfection protocol – very little experience
  - Nothing out there for this, for this industry
- Confirmed ill food handlers (24 – over course of outbreak)
  - Very little experience
    - Years since last HAV food handler!
  - Public notification possible
San Diego County Solutions

Challenge for DEH: “Lack of disinfection protocol”

Actions:

1. Identified research: adequate chlorine disinfection concentrations
   - published in 1990 in the Applied and Environmental Microbiology Journal

2. Developed disinfection protocol for permitted facilities
   - Specific concentration contact time
   - Important section on vomiting/diarrhea clean up
   - 6 languages

3. Quickly distributed to over 14,000 food facilities (plus growers/farmers, hazmat, public pools)
   - Email (Gov dev.), website & during inspections
Sanitation: Disinfection Guide

Hepatitis A

**Disinfection Guidelines**

- **High PPM:**
  - *Highly impacted public facing surfaces for restaurants in impacted areas* *ill FH*

- **Handwashing**
  - *Food employees shall thoroughly wash their hands and arms with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds; thoroughly rinse with clear running water and properly dry their hands and arms. Use sanitizing hand washing signs in the appropriate locations.*

**Steps to Clean Spills of Vomit or Feces**

- Place personal protective equipment, including two sets of gloves, masks and gowns.
- Wash off excess in a sink.
- Clean up all debris using disposable absorbent material (paper towels or other type of disposable cloths) and disinfectant according to the manufacturer’s guidelines.
- Discard used items carefully in a biohazard plastic bag.
- Thoroughly clean affected area.
- Cleaners should be aware of the contamination with an appropriate disinfectant effective against Hepatitis A. Read and understand label directions.
- Take off all sets of gloves, gowns, and masks in that order, and discard before entering contaminated area.
- Place discarded PPE in a disposable plastic bag.
- Wear the inner set of gloves, pair up to a secure trash container, do not allow the bag to come into contact with clothing.
- If any work area handling is contaminated, clean or sanitize.

**Specific Cleaning Methods**

- **Wipe Gloves and Protect Your Clothing**
- **Hard Surfaces**
  - Disinfect surfaces with bleach or other approved disinfectant, ensuring the occupied contact time is being met.
  - If a solution is used, a prepared preparation area, make sure to wash with water after surfaces that are contacted or damaged by bleach, see another product that is effective against Hepatitis A.

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- **Proper Handling**
  - Use chemicals in all-recommended areas.
  - Do not contact hands with mouth or nose.
  - Wear gloves and wash with soap and warm water.
  - Wear protective clothing.
  - Store chemicals in a locked cabinet.

- **Effective Disinfection for Surfaces Exposed to Hepatitis A**
  - **Chlorine Bleach Mix** and use the dilute solution peracrylate.
  - Allow 1 minute for contact time and then dry with a towel.
  - **SSDI 1, 2, 3** use bleach with sodium hypochlorite solution, recommend use of 1/3 cup bleach per 1 gallon of water.
  - **Other Disinfectants**
    - To determine if a product is effective against Hepatitis A, review the label and product specification or consult the manufacturer for information on the effectiveness against Hepatitis A or effectiveness against Feline Calicivirus.

- **Employee Health Protection**

  - **Healthcare Workers**
    - Wear gloves, masks, and gowns.
    - Wash hands properly.

- **Employees are Responsible for Notifying the Person in Charge**
  - Notify the Person in Charge if you have become exposed or infected with Hepatitis A.

- **Protection of Hepatitis A**
  - **Counseling**
    - Education, counseling, and support for employees who have been exposed to Hepatitis A.

- **PPE**
  - Use PPE when performing medical procedures, including gloves, masks, and gowns.

- **Handwashing**
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- **Cleaning**
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San Diego County Solutions

- Challenge: Confirmed ill food handlers
  - 24 over outbreak

Actions:
- PHS: All other food handlers in each facility offered vaccination – event usually at facility
- Developed Protocol – Public notification helpful?
  - Used known algorithm (thank you Dr. M!)
  - Developed new Field questionnaire
    - Answered Algorithm questions and others
    - Completeness and consistency
- DEH & PHS met to discuss possible action
- All within same day
**Public Notification – The Algorithm used**

**Figure:** Algorithm used by NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Health Hygiene to Determine the Need for Hepatitis A Virus Postexposure Prophylaxis of Restaurant Patrons.

Field Data Collected

- Contact information for operator
- Obtain employee’s work schedule
- List all work duties of ill employee
- Are gloves used in facility? By this employee?
- Is proper handwashing observed during inspection?
- List any major violations observed:
- Is food handler training up-to-date?
- Any other ill food handlers in last 30 days? If so, names, dates/times worked
- Any reports of customers illness?
- Number of daily meals sold per day of week
- Estimated # of repeat customers
Field Data Collected

Restroom specific

- Do employees share restroom with customers?
- Who is in charge of cleaning the restroom?
- How often is restroom cleaned and/or stocked?
- What sanitizer is used when cleaning the restroom?
- Are procedures and sanitizer sufficient to combat Hep A?
- If PPE is used to clean restroom, list type:
Public Notification

Hepatitis A Case Reported at Pacific Beach Restaurant

San Diego County health officials are advising the public that anyone who may have eaten or had beverages at the World Famous restaurant in Pacific Beach on seven specific dates and times that they may have been exposed to a person with the hepatitis A virus.

Afterwards: confirmed case 1 of several exposures...
Questions?

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