**An Important Message to Food Service Establishments about**

**Kentucky’s Hepatitis A Outbreak**

In response to the Hepatitis A outbreak in Kentucky, the Kentucky Department for Public Health is encouraging all food service establishments to be vigilant by emphasizing good hygiene and sanitation practices for your employees. To prevent the spread of hepatitis A from an infected food worker to co-workers and/or restaurant patrons, **food workers should never touch ready-to-eat foods with bare hands and should carefully wash their hands with warm water and soap after using the bathroom**, even if the food worker does not feel sick.

**Employees should never work while they are sick with stomach (gastrointestinal) illnesses. Please note that hand sanitizer is not effective at killing or cleaning away Hepatitis A infection. Hand washing with warm water and soap is essential.**

**How is hepatitis A transmitted?**

* The hepatitis A infection is associated with inadequate sanitation and hygiene. It is transmitted through ingestion of contaminated food and drink or through direct contact with an infectious person.
* The virus can live for months in a contaminated environment, particularly in the absence of good sanitation.
* A person can be contagious and shed the virus for up to two weeks before showing symptoms of illness.
* Hepatitis A can be transmitted by touching door handles and counter tops, by sharing cigarettes, towels or drinks, or by exchanging money with someone who has the virus.

In addition to thorough hand washing and proper sanitation, the best way to prevent the spread of hepatitis A is vaccination. An employee with hepatitis A can be costly to your business as well as the employee. Please encourage your employees to get vaccinated.

If you have questions about food sanitation and hygiene practices, please call the Food Safety Branch at 502-564-7181. For additional information relating to Hepatitis A, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/docs/factsheets/can-restaurant-managers-talk-with-sick-workers-p.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm>

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dehp/idb/Pages/Hepatitis%20A%20Outbreak.aspx>

