



Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department

Press Release

Contact Information:

Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department

Carrie Brainard

Phone: 304-420-1479/cell: 304-488-3305

Carrie.L.Brainard@wv.gov

Cracker Barrel Old Country Store

Heidi Pearce

(615) 235-4135

media.relations@crackerbarrel.com

For Immediate Release

Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department Confirms Hepatitis A in Food Service Worker

The Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department has confirmed a case of Hepatitis A in a food service worker employed at the Cracker Barrel restaurant in Mineral Wells, WV.

While the risk of contracting Hepatitis A from visiting Cracker Barrel is low, people who have not been vaccinated against Hepatitis A and who consumed food at the restaurant between October 15th through October 21st should consider getting the Hepatitis A vaccine **not more than two weeks from the potential exposure to help prevent infection.**

Through an assessment by the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, the risk of restaurant patrons contracting Hepatitis A was found to be low. The restaurant voluntarily closed to clean and sanitize and has since been reopened following an inspection by the Health Department.

"At Cracker Barrel, nothing is more important to us than the health and well-being of our guests and employees. Along with the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, we jointly agreed to close the store, and we took proactive steps including cleaning and sanitizing. We are also working in collaboration with the Health Department to arrange for a clinic to vaccinate all employees," stated Heidi Pearce, Cracker Barrel Old Country Store spokesperson.

Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver that can cause loss of appetite, nausea, tiredness, fever, stomach pain, brown colored urine, and light-colored stools. Yellowing of the skin or eyes may also appear. People may have some or none of these symptoms. It could take up to 50 days after being exposed to the virus for someone to become ill, but most people experience symptoms within 28-30 days after being exposed. Hepatitis A usually spreads when a person unknowingly ingests the virus from objects, food, or drinks contaminated by small, undetected amounts of stool from an infected person. The virus spreads when an infected person does not wash his/her hands adequately after using the toilet, changing diapers, or engages in behaviors that increase risk of infection.

The best means of prevention is through proper handwashing using hot water and soap after using the restroom and prior to handling food. Hand sanitizer alone is not effective for Hepatitis A. Proper

handwashing is the most important factor in preventing the spread of many diseases, particularly Hepatitis A.

The purpose of this alert is preventative as well as informative; no cases resulting from exposure while visiting the restaurant have been reported. Most cases reported throughout the state have been person-to-person contact occurring primarily among people who are transients, those who are homeless, persons who use injection and non-injection drugs, and their close direct contacts.

Persons suspecting that they have symptoms of Hepatitis A should contact their health care provider. Persons working as food handlers who experience symptoms of Hepatitis A should not work and should be seen by a health care provider. Individuals with questions should contact their personal health care provider or the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department at 304-485-7374 ext. 118

This investigation is part of a multistate outbreak of Hepatitis A. The Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department is working closely with the WV Bureau of Public Health to address cases, contacts and immunization in high risk populations. To find out more about Hepatitis A, visit <http://www.hepawarewv.org>.

###