Food safety expert shares tips for preventing hepatitis A in the kitchen

Contagious virus can be spread by contaminated food and drink

By Maddy Rohr, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan – After a brand of organic frozen strawberries were linked to the hepatitis A virus, Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee reminds consumers that washing hands is important to preventing illness.

“Hepatitis A can be spread from close, personal contact with an infected person as it is very contagious,” Blakeslee said. “Eating food or drink that has been contaminated at any point in the food chain from harvesting, processing, handling and at home can lead to hepatitis A illness.”

The most frequently contaminated food sources include water or ice, shellfish, raw vegetables and fruit (such as berries) and fresh salads.

“Symptoms of hepatitis A can appear in 2-7 weeks after exposure,” Blakeslee said. “Some signs of illness include yellow skin or eyes, no appetite, upset stomach, pain in the stomach, throwing up, fever, dark urine, joint pain, diarrhea and fatigue.”

In most cases, those infected have symptoms for a few weeks to a few months. Blakeslee said in some cases, hospitalization is necessary.

“Handwashing is an important prevention method to reduce the spread of hepatitis A and other illnesses,” Blakeslee said.

Blakeslee, who is also coordinator of K-State’s Rapid Response Center for food science, publishes a monthly newsletter called You Asked It! that provides numerous tips on being safe and healthy. More information also is available from local extension offices in Kansas.

-30-
FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Rapid Response Center for food science, https://www.rrc.k-state.edu

You Asked It! newsletter, https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter/


K-State Research and Extension local offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

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