FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 15, 2016

Earlier this week, the health department confirmed that a food service worker in Missoula County tested positive for Hepatitis A. While the food service employee was excluded from work during most of the time that they had symptoms, there is a potential for customer exposure because Hepatitis A can be spread before a person has symptoms – before they know they are infectious or ill. To address this possibility, the department is issuing this public notice in conjunction with the Good Food Store, where the employee’s job included preparing foods for the self-serve salad bar. Ready-to-eat-foods such as those found on a salad bar won’t be cooked or washed by the consumer prior to eating and can be a vehicle for contamination.

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by a virus that is spread by contaminated food and water, which is why proper food handling, hand washing, and food handler hygiene is important in preventing its spread. The Good Food Store followed proper sick employee exclusion rules and has excellent policies, practices, and facilities for food handling and hand washing.

The Missoula City-County Health Department recommends the following courses of action:

- If you ate food from the self-serve salad bar at the Good Food Store between August 15 and September 13, please be alert for symptoms of Hepatitis A. Symptoms may include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, dark urine, clay-colored bowel movements, joint pain, abdominal cramping and jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes). If you start to have any of these symptoms, we urge you to contact the health department at 258-3896 or your health care provider.

- If you ate food from the self-serve salad bar at the Good Food Store within the past two weeks and have not been previously immunized for Hepatitis A, an immunization given within two weeks of exposure may protect you from getting the disease. Please come to the health department or contact your health care provider as soon as possible to discuss immunization options.

- If you did not eat food from the self-serve salad bar at the Good Food Store, no action is recommended at this time.

We appreciate the Good Food Store’s cooperation and transparency on this matter and their efforts to mitigate any risk to public health. At this time there are no other known cases of Hepatitis A in Missoula and we will update the public as more information becomes available.

For questions about Hepatitis A disease and immunizations, please call 258-3500. For more information go to Immunization & Clinic Services webpage

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