

Chief Health Officer advisory information

For businesses importing semi-dried tomatoes or ingredients used in semi-dried tomato products

Wednesday, 10 February 2010

Hepatitis A is a viral disease that affects the liver. It can cause serious illness and even death in vulnerable people.

Victoria has recently experienced an outbreak of the Hepatitis A virus.

On the information currently available, I consider that the most likely explanation for the transmission of the Hepatitis A virus in these cases has been the consumption of semi-dried tomatoes.

I am aware that semi-dried tomatoes and other ingredients used in "dressed" semi-dried tomato products that are sold in Victoria may be sourced from a variety of countries.

In some of these countries, the Hepatitis A virus is endemic in the local population. This is not the case in Victoria. Many Victorians have no immunity to this virus.

The Department of Health is taking a number of steps designed to prevent or mitigate the consequences of this risk to public health.

As a risk management measure, I advise all businesses that are importing semi-dried tomatoes or other ingredients used in dressed semi-dried tomato products to source their supplies from businesses that have internationally certified quality assurance systems in place that are relevant to food production.

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CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER