

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **HEPATITIS A EXPOSURE AT A PORT CHESTER RESTAURANT Preventive Treatment Being Made Available**

The Westchester County Department of Health is recommending that individuals who ate or drank at bartaco, a restaurant in Port Chester, between October 12<sup>th</sup> and October 23<sup>rd</sup> receive preventive treatment against Hepatitis A, a viral illness that affects the liver. The health department learned today that an employee with the illness worked at the restaurant while infectious.

Preventive treatment is only effective if given within two weeks of exposure. Therefore, **those who dined on October 12<sup>th</sup> need to receive preventive treatment by tomorrow, October 26<sup>th</sup>. Those who dined on October 13<sup>th</sup> through October 23<sup>rd</sup> need to receive preventive treatment within two weeks of their exposure.**

The health department will offer free preventive treatment at the County Center in White Plains for people who ate or drank at bartaco in Port Chester during this time period. Anyone with a prior history of Hepatitis A vaccination or Hepatitis A infection does not need to be treated. The health department will offer preventive treatment on the following dates and times:

- Thursday, October 26 from 4:00 – 7:45 p.m.
- Friday, October 27 from 12:00 – 4:45 p.m.
- Saturday, October 28 from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Anyone under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent/guardian to provide consent. Advance registration for the county preventive clinic is highly recommended. To register, go to [www.health.ny.gov/gotoclinic/60](http://www.health.ny.gov/gotoclinic/60). If you do not have internet access or need more information, call 211 from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Restaurant patrons with exposure can also be treated by their own health care provider.

The Westchester County Department of Health is also informing people who ate or drank at bartaco in Port Chester between August 22<sup>nd</sup> and October 11<sup>th</sup> that they may also have been exposed to Hepatitis A. While these individuals are outside the window to receive preventive treatment, they should contact their health care provider immediately if they experience symptoms so that anyone they may have exposed can receive preventive treatment. Upon learning of the first cases, the Health Department immediately launched

an investigation into the source of the infection.

“Hepatitis A is generally a mild illness whose symptoms include fatigue, fever, poor appetite, abdominal pain, diarrhea, dark urine, light colored stool and jaundice, which is the yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes” said Dr. Sherlita Amler, Commissioner of Health. “There are no special medications used to treat a person once symptoms appear, but Hepatitis A transmission to others can be prevented through proper handwashing.”

Not everyone infected with Hepatitis A will have all of its symptoms. Symptoms commonly appear within 28 days of exposure, with a range of 15 to 50 days. Preventive treatment is only effective within two weeks of exposure to the virus, but symptoms typically do not appear until a person has had the virus for a few weeks. The illness is rarely fatal and most people recover in a few weeks without any complications.

bartaco in Port Chester has fully cooperated with the investigation and voluntarily closed the restaurant today. The restaurant is also voluntarily vaccinating all employees with the Hepatitis A vaccine. The restaurant will reopen after it has been re-inspected and approved by the Westchester County Department of Health. An inspection is scheduled for tomorrow. bartaco in Port Chester has also made resources available to assist staff and patrons. “We are committed to food safety and the quality of our food,” said Pam Ritz, a bartaco spokeswoman. “We have set-up a dedicated phone line for any guests who may wish to ask us questions directly and we encourage our guests to reach out at 844-617-8242, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week.”

Hepatitis A is transmitted by consuming food or drinks that have been handled by an infected person. It may also be spread from person to person by ingesting something that has been contaminated with the stool of a person with Hepatitis A. Casual contact, such as sitting together, does not spread the virus.

Hepatitis A is reportable to the health department. In 2016, Westchester had six cases of Hepatitis A. Through September 2017, Westchester had five cases.

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