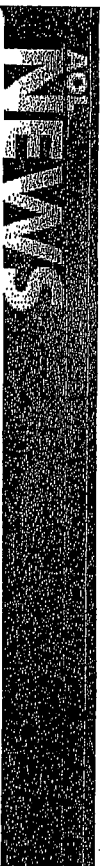


WE ARE STRONGLY ADVISING EVERYONE TO GET THE HEPATITIS A SHOTS. YOU TAKE 2 SHOTS 6 MONTHS TO 12 MONTHS APART. AFTER THE FIRST SHOT, YOU WILL HAVE IMMUNITY TO HEPATITIS A IN THREE WEEKS. THE SECOND SHOT WILL GIVE IMMUNITY FOR 10 YEARS TO LIFE. THE SHOTS ARE VERY SAFE AND ARE GIVEN TO CHILDREN AND EVEN, AT TIMES, TO PREGNANT WOMEN.

THE REASON FOR THE CHANGE IN MY RECOMMENDATION IS THE EMERGENCE OF HEPATITIS A IN THE USA FROM IMPORTED VEGETABLES FROM MEXICO. THREE PEOPLE IN PENNSYLVANNIA DIED RECENTLY AFTER 500 CONTRACTED THE DISEASE THERE. NEW REPORTS SHOW INCREASED NUMBERS OF CASES IN NEW JERSEY AND OTHER STATES.

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# Pennsylvania Hepatitis Cases Exceed 500

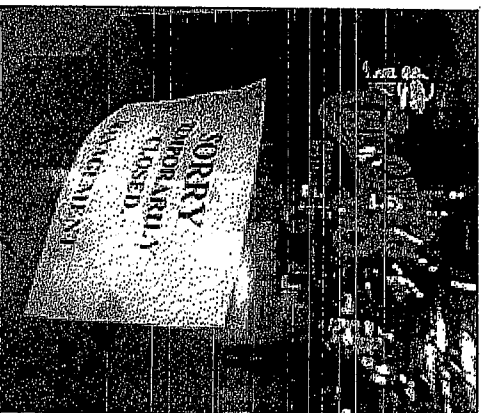
## Three of Those Infected Have Died

By JOE MANDAK, AP

PITTSBURGH (Nov. 16) - The number of people infected in a hepatitis A outbreak linked to a western Pennsylvania restaurant has exceeded 500 and is likely to continue rising for another week, state Health Department officials said.

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AP

A Chi Chi's restaurant closed after the hepatitis outbreak, but officials are unsure of the illness' source.

As of Saturday, 510 cases of hepatitis A had been confirmed in the outbreak, Pennsylvania Health Department spokesman Richard McGarvey said.

He said more infections are expected because people who contract hepatitis A typically don't exhibit its early flu-like symptoms for 28 to 30 days.

Three people infected with the virus have died, and thousands have lined up for inoculations since the outbreak was reported in early November among people who ate at a Chi-Chi's Mexican restaurant. A Chi-Chi's executive said the company has adopted "extraordinary measures" companywide, including sickness logs for employees and asking workers to sign "wellness statements," asserting they are not ill, in an effort to prevent similar outbreaks elsewhere.

- **Talk About It** The state started offering antibody inoculations Nov. 5, shortly after the first cases were diagnosed, to anyone who ate at the restaurant after Oct. 22. The antibody greatly reduces the risk of hepatitis A developing, but it must be given within two weeks of exposure.
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The virus' nearly monthlong incubation period means people exposed before Oct. 22 could still start showing symptoms through next weekend. In severe cases, it can lead to liver failure.

"We still haven't reached that date, when all those inoculations are going to help," McGa said Saturday. After Nov. 22, health officials expect the number of new infections to level and eventually stop, he said.

About 8,500 people received the shots because of the outbreak

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linked to a Chi-Chi's at the Beaver Valley Mall, about 25 miles northwest of Pittsburgh.

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All 60 employees of that restaurant will remain under medical supervision until each has been medically cleared, said Bill

#### **Broadband Only** Deadly Virus Spreads

Zavertnik, chief operating officer at Louisville, Ky.-based Chi-Chi's. The restaurant is closed until Jan. 2.

Eleven employees who tested positive for hepatitis A remain under medical care and the were given antibodies, Zavertnik said.

#### **More on This Story**

- The company already certifies its managers in food handling safety, in addition to the new employee health measures initiated at all of its restaurants, scattered from Minnesota to the mid-Atlantic states.
- CDC Information on Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis A Risk Factors

Zavertnik said Chi-Chi's food purchasers are cooperating with investigators to identify the source of the outbreak and the company has hired an outside medical expert to work with the federal Centers for Disease Control and the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Health investigators say they still don't know the source of the virus. They're looking at foods, including green onions, which are difficult to clean and have been linked to small outbreaks in other states.

Chi-Chi's removed green onions, or scallions, from all of its restaurants as a precaution, Zavertnik said.

Richard Quatarone, a spokesman for the Georgia Division of Public Health, said that while outbreaks in September in Tennessee and Georgia, neither linked to Chi-Chi's restaurant were believed to have stemmed from green onions, investigators don't know how the virus got there and the two cases involved different strains of the virus.

"It's possible they're connected. It could have been a grower or a contaminated water source," he said. "Was there a sewer break at the time the onions were picked? Or was it people picking and bunching them?"

Zavertnik wouldn't comment on lawsuits that have been filed as a result of the outbreak. He said he didn't know details about the restaurant's green onion supplier.

The Food and Drug Administration said green onions and foods containing green onions should be cooked thoroughly to reduce or eliminate the risk of contracting hepatitis A. Foods such as salsa, green salads and tuna salad often contain raw or lightly cooked green onions.

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