



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

April 24, 2008

CONTACT: Leslie Ridgeway (619) 685-2239

HEPATITIS A UPDATE – APRIL 24, 2008

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) reports six additional cases of Hepatitis A linked to possible exposure at a Chipotle restaurant in La Mesa, bringing the total number of cases to 12.

HHSA Community Epidemiology employees are interviewing individuals whose symptoms are consistent with the illness. Epidemiology and County Department of Environmental Health (DEH) staff continue to investigate the source of the illness.

The County recommends that individuals who dined at the restaurant between March 1 and April 22, 2008 - and are symptomatic for Hepatitis A - see their physician to be screened for the illness.

“Hepatitis A is a vaccine-preventable illness. The key to prevention also includes appropriate and frequent hand-washing,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County of San Diego Public Health Officer.

“The health and safety of our customers and employees is our highest priority,” said Monty Moran, president and chief operating officer of Chipotle. “We continue to partner with the County of San Diego as they investigate the cause of this illness. Employees tested to date have been negative for Hepatitis A. Our restaurant has received ‘A’ ratings in all five inspections in the last five months.”

Hepatitis A is commonly transmitted when an object contaminated with the stool of someone with Hepatitis A comes in contact with another person’s mouth. Exposure also can take place when an individual consumes food or water contaminated with the Hepatitis A virus. Good hygiene practices, including washing hands or the use of hand sanitizer after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing and eating food, are important to prevent the spread of Hepatitis A.

Symptoms include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark urine, and jaundice. Hepatitis A does not become chronic; symptoms usually last less than 2 months. In 2007, there were 82 cases of Hepatitis A in San Diego County. Individuals with no medical provider, or anyone who would like more information, may call the County Epidemiology Branch at (619) 515-6620. Information about Hepatitis A vaccine may be obtained from the HHSA Immunizations Branch at (619) 692-8661. More information is also available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at www.cdc.gov.

###