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HEALTH WARNING ON SEMI-DRIED TOMATOES

Health authorities in Victoria have advised people to avoid eating semi-dried tomatoes unless they are thoroughly cooked.

The advice follows notification that several people have been diagnosed with hepatitis A this week in Victoria.

Consumption of semi-dried tomatoes was associated with a number of cases of hepatitis A earlier this year.

The product is widely available in supermarkets, independent delis and cafes throughout Victoria. They are also used by restaurants and cafes in many foods, including salads and sandwiches.

Victoria's Chief Health Officer Dr John Carnie said the move was precautionary. Other states and territories are being advised of the recent Victorian cases.

“People who may have semi-dried tomatoes at home should not eat them unless they are thoroughly cooked - such as in pizza and quiche. Restaurants and cafes should also follow this advice.

“The recent spike in cases follows an increase in May of hepatitis A cases in Victoria and South Australia.

“At this stage we are unclear as to why there has been a recent spike in cases in Victoria.

“We are also working with the Victorian manufacturers to try and identify the source.

Since May the health departments of South Australia and Victoria have been working closely to identify the source of the contamination and this work has continued.

Hepatitis A is spread when traces of faecal matter containing the virus contaminates hands, objects, water or food and is then taken in by mouth.

Symptoms of hepatitis A include abdominal pain, nausea, fever and chills and jaundice. Anyone experiencing these symptoms should contact their GP or *Nurse On Call* on 1300 6060 24.

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