



## **Public Health**

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### **Region IV Public Health**

Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties  
and Cowlitz Tribe

### **Health Advisory**

Please deliver a copy of the accompanying alert to each provider in your organization.

**Thank you**

**Questions regarding this alert may be  
directed to the office of:**

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH  
**Health Officer**

Clark County Public Health  
Cowlitz County Health Department  
Skamania County Health Department  
Wahkiakum County Department of Health and Human Services  
(360) 397-8412

**Please Distribute**

Categories of Health Alert messages:

**Health Alert:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** provides important information for specific incident for situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.



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## HEALTH ADVISORY

October 8, 2013

**TO:** Physicians and other Healthcare Providers

**FROM:** Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH, Health Officer

**RE:** Acute Hepatitis Failure and Liver Failure Following the Use of a Dietary Supplement Intended for Weight Loss or Muscle Building

The purpose of this advisory is to alert you about reports of previously healthy individuals who developed acute hepatitis and sudden liver failure of unknown cause, and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for increased vigilance by public health agencies, emergency departments and healthcare providers.

### **Background:**

On September 9, 2013, the Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) was notified of seven patients with severe acute hepatitis and sudden liver failure of unknown cause. The patients were previously healthy and sought medical care from May through September 2013. Clinicians reported that the seven patients had all used OxyELITE Pro, a dietary supplement marketed for weight loss and muscle gain, prior to illness onset.

The investigation is ongoing and the data presented are preliminary. Thus far, clinicians have reported 45 patients to the Hawaii DOH in response to a public health alert. Of those, 29 patients, including the original seven, were confirmed to have acute hepatitis after using a nutritional supplement for weight loss or muscle building. The median age of the 29 patients is 33 years; 14 (48%) are male. The date of the first reported laboratory test was used as a proxy for illness onset and ranged from May 10 through October 3, 2013. The most commonly reported symptoms included loss of appetite, light-colored stools, dark urine, and jaundice. Median laboratory values reported at the peak of illness were the following:

- aspartate aminotransferase (AST) 1,128 IU/L;
- alanine transaminase (ALT) 1,793 IU/L;
- alkaline phosphatase 150 IU/L; and
- total bilirubin 12.6 mg/dL.

Ten patients had liver biopsy data available at the time of this report. Seven had histology consistent with hepatitis from drug/toxic injury, with findings including hepatocellular necrosis and cholestasis. Three patients had liver biopsy findings of acute hepatitis associated with other etiologies such as autoimmune hepatitis. Eleven (38%) patients were hospitalized, with a median duration of seven days. One patient died, and two patients received liver transplants. Two remain hospitalized, and all other hospitalized patients have been discharged.

Of the 29 identified patients, 24 (83%) reported using OxyELITE Pro during the 60 days prior to illness onset. There was no other dietary supplement or medication use reported in common by more than two patients.

National case finding efforts have identified several individuals from states outside Hawaii with reported OxyELITE Pro or other weight loss or muscle building dietary supplement use prior to the development of acute hepatitis of unknown cause. CDC, in collaboration with state health departments, is collecting additional clinical and epidemiologic information from these individuals to determine if this outbreak is national in scope.

**Case definition:**

An individual with acute-onset hepatitis of unknown etiology that developed symptoms on or after April 1, 2013 following use of a non-prescription weight loss or muscle building dietary supplement during the 60 days prior to illness onset.

With acute-onset hepatitis of unknown etiology defined as having BOTH:

- ALT > 4 times the upper limit of normal
- Total bilirubin > 2 times the upper limit of normal

AND

-negative workup for infectious or other explicative etiologies for hepatitis.

Workup for other potential etiologies should include:

- Hepatic imaging (i.e., ultrasound/doppler, CT scan, MRI) not consistent with alternative, explicative etiologies
- Negative viral hepatitis panel
- No pre-existing diagnosis of chronic liver disease (e.g., autoimmune hepatitis, primary biliary cirrhosis, primary sclerosing cholangitis, Wilson's disease, hemochromatosis)
- No recent hypotensive shock or septic episodes - No history of alcoholism documented in medical records

**CDC Recommendations for physicians and other healthcare providers for patients presenting with acute hepatitis and sudden liver failure following use of a weight loss or muscle building nutritional supplement:**

- Clinicians evaluating patients with acute hepatitis should ask about consumption of dietary supplements as part of a comprehensive evaluation.
- Clinicians should report patients meeting the case definition to the local or state health department, as well as the US Food and Drug Administration's MedWatch program online at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/medwatch/> or by phone at 1-888-INFO-FDA.
- People who use dietary supplements for weight loss or muscle gain should do so with caution and under a medical provider's close supervision.

**To report notifiable conditions or if you have questions, please call:**

- Clark County Public Health: (360) 397-8182
- Cowlitz County Health and Human Services: (360) 414-5599
- Skamania County Community Health: (509) 427-3850
- Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services (360) 795-6207

Thank you for your partnership.