

EPI Update for Friday, November 19, 2010
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Protect infants with a “cocoon” of vaccinated caregivers**
- **Healthcare providers can help prevent antibiotic resistance**
- **Traveler’s safety – Haiti**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Protect infants with a “cocoon” of vaccinated caregivers

Infants are the group at highest risk of being hospitalized and dying from influenza and whooping cough, yet they are too young to be fully immunized against these serious diseases. As families prepare for a new child by readying a crib and installing a baby car seat, they should also make sure everyone who will be caring for that child is fully vaccinated against both the flu and whooping cough. Those needing to be immunized include mom and dad, siblings, and other caregivers like grandparents and baby sitters.

Both health care providers and new parents should make protecting their baby from vaccine-preventable diseases a priority. During prenatal visits, as well as after delivery, health care providers should check to ensure that all family members and potential care givers are vaccinated. New parents should insist that all those caring for their baby – parents, grandparents, siblings, baby sitters, day care providers – are all fully immunized before they are allowed to care for the child.

Now is the perfect time to check the immunization status for all those who are already or will be around babies this winter. Adults need to receive a Tdap (the adult tetanus booster that contains pertussis –whooping cough) and a seasonal influenza vaccination. When family members and care givers get vaccinated, they are not only protecting their own health; they are also providing important protection for the very vulnerable baby.

Healthcare providers can help prevent antibiotic resistance

Antibiotics are the most important tool we have to combat life-threatening bacterial diseases. As a result of antibiotics being unnecessarily prescribed, the effectiveness of these medications is becoming compromised. Patients, healthcare providers, hospital administrators and policy makers must work together to employ effective strategies for improving appropriate antibiotic use - ultimately saving lives.

Healthcare providers can help prevent antibiotic resistance by considering the following recommendations:

- Never treat viral syndromes with antibiotics, even when patients ask for them.
- Prescribe the right antibiotic; be familiar with resistance trends in your region.
- Refine antibiotic choice once the pathogen causing the infection has been identified.
- Talk to patients and parents to identify expectations. Studies show pediatricians may overestimate the patient's desire for an antibiotic prescription. Patients report high satisfaction without antibiotic prescriptions if the provider takes the time to explain why an antibiotic isn't needed.
- Work with pharmacists to counsel patients on appropriate antibiotic use, antibiotic resistance and adverse effects.
- Make appropriate antibiotic use in hospitals and nursing homes part of a quality improvement program.

Get Smart About Antibiotics Week is November 15-21. To learn more, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/antibiotic_resistance.asp.

Traveler's safety - Haiti

A previous Epi Update issue reported an ongoing outbreak of cholera in Haiti. Since the report, there has been a case of cholera identified in Florida in a United States citizen with a recent travel history to Haiti.

Health care providers should immediately report known or suspected cases of cholera to public health officials.

For prevention and treatment guidance for travelers to and from Haiti, visit wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/content/news-announcements/cholera-travelers-returning-from-haiti.aspx. For more information about the outbreak in Haiti, visit www.cdc.gov/haiticholera.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None

Due to the Thanksgiving Holiday, there will not be an EPI Update next week.

Have a healthy and happy week! And Happy Thanksgiving!

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