

EPI Update for Friday, October 30, 2015
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Masks are not just for Halloween**
- **Influenza circulating in Iowa**
- **What is in a name?**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Masks are not just for Halloween

When determining the use of masks when dealing with patients who may have infectious diseases, remember the type of mask selected for patient care is based on the mode of transmission of the disease.

Mumps, rubella, and influenza viruses and pertussis are spread by droplets. Droplet precautions are intended to prevent transmission of pathogens spread through close respiratory or mucous membrane contact with respiratory secretions:

- Mask the patient immediately upon entry into facility.
- Healthcare personnel should wear a mask (a respirator is not necessary) for close contact with an infectious patient. The mask is generally donned upon entry to the room.

Measles and chickenpox viruses and tuberculosis are spread in the air.

Airborne precautions prevent transmission of infectious agents that remain infectious over long distances because they are suspended in the air. N-95 masks or higher level respirators are recommended by CDC to be used with a potentially infectious patient.

When airborne precautions are hard to implement due to limited engineering resources (for example, in some clinic offices), the following steps should be taken to reduce transmission:

- Mask the patient immediately upon entry into facility.
- Place the patient immediately in a private examination room with the door closed (do not have these patients sit in a waiting room).
- See these patients at a time in the clinic when few if any other patients or staff are around.
- Healthcare personnel should don N-95 or higher level respirators/masks before entering a patient's room, or if these are not available, a surgical or procedure mask that is fitted around the face should be worn.

These mask recommendations may be more stringent when performing an aerosol-producing procedure on potentially infectious patients.

For full recommendations of isolation precautions, visit

www.cdc.gov/hicpac/2007IP/2007ip_part3.html. For IDPH mask recommendations when dealing with coughing patients, visit wiki.idph.iowa.gov/epimanual/Home/CategoryID/179 and click on #3.

Influenza is circulating in Iowa

The flu season is off to an early start in Iowa. While influenza activity is still at a low level, these early cases and evidence of community spread from these cases should serve as a reminder of the importance of a yearly influenza vaccination. Fortunately, this year's vaccine is a good match for the currently circulating strains of influenza.

Everyone 6 months of age and older should get an annual influenza vaccination.

Based on CDC estimates, an average of 300,000 Iowans gets the flu every year and about 1000 Iowans die from flu and its complication of pneumonia.

While influenza is not a 'reportable disease' in Iowa (which means IDPH is not notified each time a patient tests positive for influenza), IDPH does conduct year-round influenza surveillance through the Iowa Influenza Surveillance Network. This surveillance determines the types of influenza viruses circulating and how wide influenza illness has spread. For more information about influenza in Iowa, visit idph.iowa.gov/influenza/reports.

What is in a name?

Have you ever wondered how organisms get their names? In 1880, a Scottish surgeon named Alexander Ogston identified the major cause of pus. He opened the abscess of one of his patients and made a smear of the pus. Under the microscope he saw great numbers of round organisms in clusters and chains. He determined that the abscess was caused by micrococci (from the Greek kokkos, meaning berry). Ogston named the clustered micrococci "staphylococci" from the Greek word staphyle, meaning bunches of grapes. Later, two unique strains of staphylococci were identified and named based on the appearance of their colonies - *Staphylococcus aureus* from the Latin word arum for gold, and *Staphylococcus albus* (today named *epidermidis*), from the Latin albus for white.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

None

Have a healthy and happy week!

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
Iowa Department of Public Health
800-362-2736